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In Loving Memory
of
Irene Itzkowitz
the mother of the author
who was gassed
and
cremated
in
Auschwitz

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

The author is a survivor of the Holocaust- the great human tragedy.

He is both a victim and a witness who returned from the hell of Auschwitz to carry the message and legacy of the Holocaust as the last generation of survivors.

In 1943, the author entered the Pazmany Peter National University of Budapest as the only Jewish student after graduation *cum laude* from the National Hungarian Gymnasium in Beregszasz in the Carpathian-Ruthenian region of Hungary. In March, 1944 after the German invasion of Hungary the author was expelled from the university, taken with his mother to the ghetto of Beregszasz, and ultimately just one week before D-Day and the Normandy invasion was deported in a train of cattle cars to Auschwitz in May 1944.

In the selection process in Auschwitz the author's mother was sent upon her arrival to the gas chamber where she was cremated. The author was sent to various labor camps and was given a new "non identity" - Prisoner (Animal) number 57,381.

The author was an inmate of Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Therezienstadt camps. He survived the concentration camps and a ten weeks death march. Of his original transport of 120 people from his hometown to Auschwitz only two survived the Holocaust, the author and a neighbor.

The ghetto and the fate of the Jews of Beregszasz , the hometown of the author, is prominently featured in the Auschwitz Album by P. Hellman, The Holocaust by M. Gilbert, The Documentation of the Holocaust in Hungary by R. L. Braham, and in the memoir Once Upon the Head of the Goat by A. Siegal.

The memory of the six million Jews, six million human beings, six million individuals, among them one and half million children, who perished in the Nazi Holocaust is deeply engraved in the author's heart.

In the last few years the author was invited by the faculty of Glenbrook High School South in Glenview, Illinois to conduct all day seminars on the Holocaust before the junior classes. The faculty and the students were an inspiration to the author that there is a new generation of young Americans imbued in the ideals of freedom, justice and democracy with the determination that the Holocaust will never be allowed to happen again. May the lessons learned from the Holocaust, the great human tragedy, be a beacon for rebirth of morality and humanity for America and mankind.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Fifty three years after the Holocaust, a concerned observer still must ask troubling questions : did the world comprehend the Holocaust ? did it learn from its abyss as one of the darkest ages in human history ?

Hundreds and thousands of books were written about the Holocaust by historians, philosophers, theologians ,clergymen, survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders.

The Holocaust is the topic of movies, dramas, documentaries, memoirs, novels, arts and music.

There are museums, memorials, institutes, and monument to study and commemorate the Holocaust.

There are pilgrimages to the concentration and death camps in Poland, Germany, and Austria. There is a Valley of Destroyed Communities during the Holocaust in Jerusalem. There is the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. There is the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem.

Still it is the belief of the author that there is too much emphasis on statistics, data, trivia, even commercialization of the Holocaust instead of concentrating on the real understanding of the Holocaust as the collective great human tragedy ,and as the individual and collective tragedy of millions of innocent human beings, destroyed communities, and a vanishing way of life and culture .

It is the intention and desire of the author to study the origin, magnitude, and aftermath of the Holocaust from the perspective of

the lessons to be learned.

What was the origin of the Holocaust? Shall it be traced to thousand of years of hatred of the Jews and Judaism, or to the inborn cruelty of mankind, human prejudice and hate, or to the modern political, social, and racial environment of the national state?

What was the magnitude of the Holocaust? The term "Holocaust" is used to describe the destruction of European Jewry of more than 6 million; the annihilation of thousands of Jewish communities; of tens of thousands of cultural and social institutions, synagogues and seminaries, schools and orphanages, academies and hospitals; and the uprooting of Jewish life from countries where, for the most part, Jews had lived for 1000 or more years.

The Holocaust, the systematic annihilation of 6 million Jews, including 1.5 million children, is the single most horrifying event in the 20th century, and, perhaps, in all human history. A modern state carried out a systematic murder of a whole people for no reason other than they were Jews.

Never before in history had one nation harnessed all the ideological, political, technological and national material means available to carry out a program of mass murder of another people. The Holocaust was the "Final Solution" of the Nazis, the evil aim of which to wipe out Israel's name, culture and memory from the face of the earth.

American, British, and French liberators of the concentration and death camps could not believe their eyes, could not comprehend the creation of Hell and the Kingdom of Death by the Nazis and their collaborators; could not understand the gassing of millions of

people, the ovens and the crematoria- strong men and women, soldiers, fainted at the sight of mountains of human bones and seeing the survivors, living deads.

And what in the aftermath? How did world act during the Holocaust? Why was there silence in the face of atrocities and mass murder? Where was God and where was man? How the survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders live with the memories of the Holocaust?

And above all what was learned from the Holocaust and what is the legacy of the Holocaust? Can the Holocaust happen again and how to avoid it?

To live for those who perished in the Holocaust means to teach the world the message of their death ; to hope where there is no hope ; to live humanely in an inhuman world; not to stand by silently ; to act with courage; to restore the sanctity of life, the life of every child, of young and old, of men and women ; not to kill, not to murder, but to honor life; to channel science and technology not to destroy but to save lives ; not to kill but to heal; to fight bigotry, injustice, oppression, hatred, degradation and cruelty.

This is the message of the dead that must be brought to the land of the living. The very existence of the world may depend on it. The Holocaust was not only the destruction of European Jewry but also the destruction of man, of civilization, of morality. From the Holocaust a new world and a new voice shall rise. "Never Again" must be the foundation of a mankind reborn.

THE SCOPE OF THE BOOK

" To Remember and To Learn-Lessons from the Holocaust " is intended to be a comprehensive study . It is the thesis of the author that The Holocaust was an unique tragedy in world history, not comparable to any other genocide. A modern state using all modern technology decided to totally wipe out an entire people , innocent babies and children, young and old, men and women.

The Holocaust must be remembered and the lessons learned from it must be part of human civilization. Society must learn from the past; from the inferno and ashes of the Holocaust a new world and new spirit must be created that will never allow a new holocaust and genocide to happen again.

The author is a well known lecturer and leading expert on the Holocaust. He has written numerous articles and conducts seminars and symposiums on the Holocaust. He is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Holocaust Survivors of Metropolitan Chicago. He was editor of the Holocaust Memorial Year Book of Chicago for many years and is a featured speaker at the Annual Memorial Services. He was instrumental in erecting The Holocaust Memorial Monument in the Village of Skokie.

Section 2.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the Eichmann Trial in 1961, there is increased interest in Holocaust studies.

There are great number of books, periodicals, and related research material available. Personal memoirs and publication of documents are spreading.

Various aspects of the Holocaust are explored- from the perspective of the victims, perpetrators and bystanders.

Books and articles are printed and symposiums are conducted on the attitudes of world leaders, churches, professional organizations- lawyers, judges, doctors, scientists, industrialists, merchants, writers, actors and artists, etc.

Documentaries are presented on the Nazi persecution, on the Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, Himmler, Goebbels, Goering on the concentration and death camps, the Blitzkrieg, the Allies, the bombings and rescue efforts.

There is vast material on the Jews in the Holocaust- the ghettos, the Jewish Councils, the Jewish Resistance, rescue efforts, the attitude of the Jews in the Free World, especially in the United States, etc.

Arts and music, theater, movies feature major works on the Holocaust: The Diary of Anne Frank, The Holocaust, Sophie's Choice, Kaddish, Europa, Europa, etc.

The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust in four volumes was sold in large numbers.

In Israel the Holocaust Memorial Institute -Yad Va Shem and the Valley of Destroyed Communities were established and in the United States the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum was dedicated in Washington, D.C. in 1993.

There are special publications devoted to the Holocaust : Holocaust and Genocide Studies published in Oxford, England , Patterns of Prejudice in London, England, Dimensions, Martyrdom and Resistance, and Together in the United States. Jewish periodicals such as Midstream, Commentary, Moment, and Tikkun regularly carry articles on the Holocaust.

Over five hundred books and articles dealing with the Holocaust were analysed from the perspective of remembrance and the lessons to be learned from the Holocaust in writing this book.

Section 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of "To Remember and to Learn -Lessons from the Holocaust " was researching and analysing a large number of books and articles dealing with the Holocaust with the emphasis on educational aspects and lessons to be learned.

This methodology allows the author to present the vast area of the Holocaust in a new format which , hopefully, will help to understand the Holocaust by a large number of people, students, and adults.

This methodology utilized a large segment of available material on the Holocaust.

The approach is historical and analytical review highlighting the special perspective and aim of the author.

The following areas were explored :

From Anti-semitism to Extermination

Nazism- History

Nazi Concentration Camps

Krystallnacht

The Final Solution

The Holocaust

The Holocaust in Nazi Occupied Countries

The Jewish Councils

Jewish Resistance

Rescue Plans

Children in the Holocaust

Liberation of the Camps

The Survivors

Free World Attitude during the Holocaust

The Study of the Holocaust

The Teaching of the Holocaust

The Research on the Holocaust

Holocaust Literature

Survivors, Children of Survivors, the Third Generation

Holocaust Memorials

The Legacy of the Holocaust

The Lessons from the Holocaust

SUMMARY

It was the intention of the author to create a classic comprehensive book on the Holocaust.

Today many states require the Teaching of the Holocaust on high school level. However, there is no comprehensive curriculum provided or textbook required. In most states the "Teaching of the Holocaust" is left to the principal and the teachers.

Holocaust Studies and Courses are offered by a number of colleges and universities. At the same time there is a revisionist movement which in ads in major university newspapers promulgates the denial of the Holocaust.

In the various approaches to the Holocaust two major trends are prevailing : one claims that the Holocaust is beyond imagination, and, therefore, cannot be described (Elie Wiesel is one the most prominent advocates of this trend), the other claims that the Holocaust was not a myth or an event beyond imagination and has to be presented in historical terms (this approach is supported by historians such as Yehuda Bauer, Lucy Dawidowicz, and others.) There are individual books that deal with the lessons of the Holocaust but these books are limited in their scope.

The comprehensive approach of the author, hopefully, will be a major contribution to the study, the understanding and the legacy of the Holocaust.

The author wishes to extend his deepest thanks to Dr. Linda B. Smith, Ed.D., and Dean, School of Education, California Coast University for her guidance and support.

CHAPTER 1

Those who do not remember the past are
condemned to repeat it.

George Santayana ¹

The Linkage between Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust

The Third Reich lasted from 1933 to 1945. Auschwitz which epitomizes the Holocaust, functioned as a labor and death camp from 1940 to 1944. But these momentous years were centuries in the making.²

For most of their history, Jews have been viewed as an alien presence by those around them. Jews were outsiders in the pagan world, in the Greco-Roman, Christian and Muslim world.³

Since the triumph of Christianity, there have been three fundamental anti-Jewish policies: conversion, expulsion, and annihilation. The second appeared as an alternative to the first, and the third emerged as an alternative to the second. The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: "Jews have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed proclaimed: Jew have no right to live among us. The German Nazis last declared: Jews have no right to live."⁴

Modernization in Europe caused social and economic turmoil. Money became more important than persons. Carried to the extreme in the Holocaust such attitudes denied that there is anything sacred in human life.⁵ No group would pay more for the modernization of Europe's economy than the Jews. Jews became increasingly superfluous during the nineteenth century, their competition in the market place unwanted because, official decrees to notwithstanding, Jews were still an alien minority.⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century the anti-Jewish sentiments

changed to political anti-Semitism. The social, economic, and political forces unleashed by accelerating modernization in Europe have already moved far along to seal the fate of European Jewry several decades in advance of Hitler's rise to power.

The unification of Germany under Bismarck in 1870, coupled with the Russian pogroms of 1881, formed one fateful watershed for Europe's Jewry, World War I created another one. More than inaugurating the twentieth century as one of mass death, it also proved mass extermination to be a politically acceptable method for modern states to use in reconstructing society.⁷

In addition when Germans interpreted their own defeat as a "stab in the back" fomented by a Jewish world-conspiracy, the stage was set for the beginning of the Nazi party and the emergence of its political messiah, Adolf Hitler.⁸

As the Great Depression struck, European nationalism never waned. Fascism was on rise, particularly in Poland, which had by far the largest Jewish population of any European nation between the two World Wars. The situation of Jews worsened every year. Jews were generally referred to as a pariah people.

Under Hitler and the Nazis Jews became an utterly surplus people to be diminished by expulsion if not by death.⁹ Before Hitler finished, approximately six million of the nine million Jews of Europe in 1939 were dead, and more than 90 percent of Poland's 3,300,000 Jews perished.

Christian Theological Anti-Semitism

To what extent has centuries old Teaching of Contempt attributed to the Holocaust? Is there something inherent in Christian teaching that created

a context for the unprecedented anti-Semitism and mass murder of the Holocaust?

Anti-Semitism in the West was a direct outgrowth of Christian theological anti-Judaism. Anti-Judaism was the consequence of the claim that Jesus is the Christ. This claim inevitably pitted the church against the synagogue, since it saw itself as fulfilling and superseding Judaism. It led the Church at a very early stage to develop an exegetical tradition that interpreted the Jewish Scriptures and the Jewish people as whole in Christological terms, and sought to force that with the coming of Christ and the failure of the Jewish people as a whole to recognize him, Judaism lost its status as a people of God. Jews now came to be seen as obdurate, stiffnecked, perverse, and the loss of their land and consequent homelessness as a divine punishment.¹⁰

All of Christian European history was the seedbed of the Holocaust. The Jews have remained an anomaly in the trend toward unity of modern Europe, just as they remained outside the framework of medieval Christendom. Despite efforts of assimilating on their part, the Jews could not, in the long run, be absorbed by the cultures in which they lived. When the catastrophe came, Stalin, The Papacy, The Allies, all alike ignored or minimized the plight of the Jews.

Roots of Anti-Semitism

The origin of the Holocaust can also be traced to the German anti-Semitism as expressed in the German social or "*volkish*" thinking. There were sharp anti-Jewish agitations in Germany between 1916 and 1924.

Some German historians attempt to reduce Hitlerian anti-Semitism to the common ideological denomination of all fascist movements: anti-

Marxism. For these historians Nazi anti-Semitism was but an extreme form of the anti-Bolshevism of the fascists.¹¹

From the first literary strictures against Judaism in ancient and early Christian times to about any major manifestation of anti-Jewish animus in later eras, crescendo in violence has unfolded. The progression from early riots to the Crusades, to the Black Death, to the Cossack Pogroms in Poland, to the Tsarist pogroms, to World War I has comprised an ascent of horror, each grade which promised to be the upper limit but which unfailingly paled before what followed.¹²

With the defeat of Germany in World War I and with the establishment of the Weimar Republic, in growing despair many Germans looked for some face-saving explanation for German misfortune and a new premise of national salvation. A revival of anti-Semitism provided the first: the Jews; and the rise of fierce nationalism produced the second: National Socialism and Adolf Hitler. Jews were blamed for every ill in Germany of the 20's; the loss of war, the Diktat of Versailles, and the inflation.¹³

From the start the Nazi party pursued a strong anti-Semitic policy and in 1920 incorporated seven planks in its platform which, in sum, called for the denial of citizenship and public offices to the Jews, expulsion of Jews, who had immigrated since 1914, exclusion of Jews from the press, and categorizing all German Jew as "foreigners" and "guests" of the nation.

Anti-Semitism According to Wilhelm Marr

Anti-Semitism is generally regarded as a regression trend in world undergoing industrialization and change of values. Nevertheless anti-Semites had existed in the enlightened eighteenth century, among the radicals of the

Marxism. For these historians Nazi anti-Semitism was but an extreme form of the anti-Bolshevism of the fascists.¹¹

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nineteenth century and among the revolutionaries of the twentieth century.

The word "Anti-Semitism" was coined by a radical revolutionary German, Wilhelm Marr, in 1878.

Marr argued that the instinctive antipathy against Jews is based on history and experience, that "the Jews as a race under Joseph's ministry in Egypt introduced slavery; that in Persia under Mordechai, a Jewish leader, mass slaughtered men", that "the Jews celebrate the memories of these horrors in the political Jewish Purim Festival." According to Marr "the Jews as a race are not entitled to equal treatment."

Marr expressed the opinion that Judaism, "which is the same today as it has always been, and its tribal particularity is incompatible with the life of the German state." He put forward the idea that "Judaism is nothing else than a social congregation of a tribe whose whole essence is beyond [our] morals and who, once they have struck root, will strive to take hold of everything for themselves." The reason for this is, wrote Marr, that "religiously they are commanded to do so, and socially it is their nature." Marr found among Jews only masks instead of real human beings.¹⁴

Hatred of Jews

The history of anti-Semitism is old. Demonstrations of hatred against Jews can be traced from centuries of the Christian era, and even before. The rise and the expansion of Christianity has played a most important role in the Middle Ages; at the same time social and economic elements of anti-Semitism also expanded. The transition to a new age under the Reformation and Counter Reformation brought fundamental changes in attitudes toward the Jews. When the spirit of Enlightenment flew across Europe in the eighteenth century, at first the tide seemed to have turned; during the French

revolution even Jews were granted equal rights. The nineteenth century, however, revealed a newly revived anti-Semitism. Quasi scientific theories labeled the Jews as an inferior race. In addition, anti-Semitism became a political platform and program.

The history of anti-Semitism reached its depths in Germany of Adolf Hitler; however, nearly all the Nazi measures have been conceived and put into practice earlier- with the exception of the " Final Solution of the Jewish Problem " as the Nazis cynically referred to the extermination of European Jewry.

Anti-Semitism in Antiquity was fundamentally religious. For the pagans the Jews were an irritation because they worshiped the God of the Jewish people and did not participate in the cult of other gods. This led ironically to the accusation of atheism. The Jews were viewed by Roman writers as godless people and hated by the gods.

In Christianity The Four Gospels conspicuously assumed the Jews to be guilty for the death of Jesus. The Gospels wanted to gain tolerance from the Roman emperors for the Christian religion and therefore they put the blame on the Jews and not on Pontius Pilatus and the Romans in Jerusalem for the killing of Christ.

When Christianity became the most important religion of the Roman Empire in 313, it brought an end to the period of relative tolerance of the Jews. The Church Fathers opposed the Jews with unknown fervor; they accused the Jews being the murderers of God and being the children of the devil.

In 534, Emperor Justinian had anti-Jewish regulations written into the Roman Code of Law. This Justinian Code had a great influence for centuries. John Chrysostom, the eloquent Greek Church Father of the 4th Century, wrote that "The Jews are disastrous. They have descended to the race of

dogs. The Jews have turned to the most extreme evil... They are unreasoning animals suited for slaughter. The synagogue is not only a brothel but also a den for robbery and a shelter for wild beasts."¹⁵

After the death of Chrysostom in 407, his anti-Jewish sermons were circulated throughout the Church, and long before were translated into Latin, Syrian, Russian, and other languages.

At the end of 1095, Pope Urban II summoned a crusade to liberate Jerusalem from the influence of Islam. In the summer of 1096, when the crusades get started, several thousand Jews were murdered along the Rhine River states and their houses were plundered.

The Pope and bishops in 1215 declared that Jewish clothing should be different from that of Christians to avoid any sexual relations with Jews out of ignorance and other reasons. Various clothing regulations were proclaimed such as the yellow badge or ring in France, the pointed Jewish hat in Germany. Only through conversion could the Jews avoid these humiliating decrees..

The Reformation in 1517 led to a schism in Christianity. Martin Luther, when the Jews did not convert to Protestantism, published his violently anti-Semitic tract On The Jews and Their Lies. Luther called on the sovereign to banish the Jews and burn their books and synagogues.

During the Counter Reformation of the Catholic Church the Jews of Rome and other cities were forced to live in ghettos and were forced to listen to sermons aimed at conversion.

The ideas of Luther continued to guide his followers. Luther posed the questions "What must we do with this cursed and vile race of Jews?" "They live among us and we know how they lie, slander at swear" wrote Luther. The answer is obvious according to Luther: "we can not tolerate them. Their synagogues should be burned down. Their houses should be

pulled down and destroyed. Their books should be taken from them and burned. They should not be allowed to live freely."¹⁶

So called social theories came into being in the middle of the nineteenth century. A variety of quasi-scientific works claimed that the struggle between races was the key to world history. People were said to be good or bad because of the race they belonged to, not arbitrarily. Some works claimed that only the pure Aryan race (Caucasian or Germanic) were supreme conveyers of culture. Jewry was being interpreted as a separate race, called Semitic, and its goal , even that of those who converted, was to undermine and destroy culture. In this manner, Jews were no longer considered on religious grounds, but on so called scientific grounds.

The German orientalist Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891), became the prophet of a new German religion. In his publication in 1878, Die Religion der Zukunft (The Religion of the Future), he outlined his ideas. According to Lagarde Christianity had become Judaized and because of this it failed seriously in all aspects of life, spiritual as well as social. Lagarde wrote that "every Jew is proof of the weakness of our national life and of limited values, of what we call Christian religion." In the program of the Conservative Party in Prussia in 1884, Lagarde urged " the destruction of Jewry... because otherwise Europe would become one huge graveyard." Lagarde also summoned his contemporaries to wreck the synagogues. In his Die Nachsten Angaben der Deutschen Politik (The Next Task of German Politics) Lagarde advocated the deportation of all Jews to Madagascar. (A similar plan emerged under the Nazis .) Lagarde thought it was senseless to argue with Jews. He wrote that "... because Jews are bacili and tapeworms, they should be eliminated as soon as possible." Hitler and his ideologist, Alfred Rosenberg, were great admirers of de Lagarde.¹⁷

Richard Wagner, the German composer, described the Jews as

"former cannibals, now be grained to be business agents of society. They are eternal aliens." Jews were assigned by Wagner a unique and deplicable role: "Judaism had saddled the world with a slave mentality and an obnoxious sympathy for the weak. Law and morality robbed man of his freedom and of authentic love." Wagner also wrote that "... Grecian freedom, strength and beauty had been destroyed, men had become enslaved. Europe, once completely pagan and therefore completely free, had become enslaved by the Jewish God through Christianization."¹⁸

After the Enlightenment the word anti-Semitism, coined by Wilhelm Marr, was a cunning device for giving a "scientific" flavor to socio-political agitation against the Jews, while also creating a world that sounded more polite "than Jew."¹⁹

The schism between Jews and Gentiles, however, is not a "divinely ordained event", but merely a human tragedy. And it is all more tragic to the extent that it has provided background to the "racial theories" of past centuries.²⁰

There is a genetic connection between "racial" anti-Semitism and the theological anomaly the Jews embedded in Church doctrines. There is a sequence of ideas in which one idea gives rise to another. It is obvious that without indoctrination of Christians from early childhood for centuries, through all aspects of culture, of the ideas of the Evil Jew, there would have been no foundation for transforming the Evil Jew from a mere demon because of his rejection of Christianity into the Jew as a biological enemy of the human race.

Although it is obvious that the "racial" theories of the past two hundred years are different in concept from the theology of the Church Fathers, it can hardly be an accident that a people execrated in one sphere should be the same people execrated for allegedly different reasons in another sphere. It is a

looming dimension of this vast synthetical concept, the Demon Jew, that explains normal people's ability to take such exaggerations seriously.²¹

The mere fact that "anti-Semitism" in Europe could rally whole political movements in the 19th and 20th centuries demonstrates the practical as well mythological importance of the Jews in their new incarnation as Semites. Awareness of Jews as a concept had been intensified in the real world, too, by the increase in the number of Jews in the 19th century- as part of the general population explosion- which still left the Jews a small minority but made them nevertheless more visible, and in some places enabled them to provide a real life incitement to commonplace xenophobia that could supplement the mythical dimension.

The Jews as Associates of Devil

In early Christianity the association of the Jews with the devil fulfilled several needs at once : the battle against evil could be expanded in direct acts; the scapegoat group could then be rejected, often killed or robbed, and otherwise brought to see the error of their ways- all this in the name of God.

The most powerful preachers of Christianity subscribed to these theories and their preachings were increasingly filled with incitement to hatred and slaughter. The Jews were described as devilish and satanic.

John Chrysostom, 4th century, as mentioned before, thought that the Jews were " the plaque of the universe.. possessed by the devil.. they kill and maim each other.. they murder their offsprings and offer themselves to the devil.. the synagogue is a house of the devil."

Chrysostom's teaching became a model for teaching in Catholic seminaries. As Christianity spread rapidly across Europe, so did its teachings and with it, anti-Judaism. And the darker the Dark Ages became,

the darker the lives of the Jews.

One of the most pernicious myths has been that Christian blood is demanded in the making of the Passover bread, the *Matzo*. The primitive satanic elements of this blood libel myth, combined with heightened religious tensions around the Easter-Passover season, were often enough to whip the population into a frenzy of hate and destruction against the Jews. Again and again such outbreaks occurred all over Europe from the early Middle Ages to almost the present day.

During the early crusades tens of thousands of Jews were murdered as the crusaders on their way to the Holy Land, practiced their martial acts on defenseless Jews. During the Black Death, the great plague that convulsed Europe, Jews were accused of having been responsible for the disease's outbreak, and again thousands of Jews were slaughtered for their "crime." The "crime" at that time was that the wells had been poisoned to decimate the Christian population and thus assure domination of the world by Satan and the Jews.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, literature appeared which gave national and racial reason for anti-Semitism. The national socialist theory of anti-Semitism was based on race. Yet, at closer look, Jew hatred always has been directed against the entire Jewish people, or Jewish "race." Yet the basic reason remained the same: the image of the Jew as satanic and evil, and simplification and reduction of issues between the good people and the bad ones. The emphasis on nationality and race just served a "reason" for those Jew haters who themselves were not religious but who carried this religious- born devil image of the Jews within. 22

Anti-Semitism as adopted by Hitler and the Nazis led to the Final Solution and crematoria. But already in early Gospels of Matthew Jesus says : "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Matthew 10:34). Martin

Luther, the father of Reformation, in his pamphlet in 1543 "The Jews and Their Lies" pronounces that next to Devil himself, a Christian has no enemy more cruel, more venomous, and violent than a true Jew." ²³

Some scholars claim that Christian anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish racism are closely linked but not identical. But in spite of the differences the Nazi anti-Jewish racial policy was inseparable from the religious factor. When the two stands joined up, the required attitudes were ready and waiting. All that was needed was a little more propaganda technique, a little more chaos in the political-economic scene, and the right kind of leadership to mobilize the powers of will and bureaucracy of the Holocaust.²⁴

Anti-Semitism in Germany

The Final Solution would not have been possible without the pervasive presence and uninterrupted tradition of anti-Semitism in Germany. The exposure of the German people to conventional anti-Semitism in its manifold forms- political, nationalist, racial,, cultural, doctrinal, economic- eventually rendered them supportive to Hitler's radical and deadly anti-Semitism.

The "Anti-Semites Petition" was circulated in Germany in 1880-83 and garnered nearly a quarter of a million signatures. The Petition called for: 1. The immigration of foreign Jews, if not entirely prevented, at least be restricted. 2. The Jews be excluded from all governmental positions. 3. The Christian character of the common schools, even when attended by Jewish pupils, be strictly maintained and only Christian teachers be admitted to it. 4. Resumption of the registration of the Jewish population be ordered.²⁵

The widespread acceptance of the German people of anti-Semitism as a common political dogma paved the way for Hitler's rise to power. The idea of destroying the Jews inhabited the deranged minds of anti-Semites long

before Hitler, but only Hitler turned the fantasy into reality. All his life Hitler was obsessed by the thought of a holy war against the Jews, whom he saw as the Host of the Devil and the Children of Darkness.

Almost without exception general histories of National Socialism and especially the Nazi policies concerning the "The Jewish Question" begin with the nineteenth century anti-Semitism. Conversely most work on anti-Semitism in pre-Nazi Germany see nineteenth century anti-Semitism as a prelude to the Holocaust.

Anti-Semitism was the center of "German Ideology", an institutional part of *Folkish* movement and finally the basic reality of Nazism, the realization of a dream.²⁶

The Amalgamation of Racial and Theological Anti-Semitism

The theories of racial anti-Semitism helped to consolidate ideas by making clear thought of them, transforming them into a plan of execution, eventually carried out by the Nazis.²⁷

The same time no historical interpretation doubt that the anti-Jewish postures of Christianity were the single most important factor in the continuity of anti-Jewish sentiments since antiquity, that at least the silence of the churches while the Jews were deprived of their legal rights, the chased and the exterminated, was in part made possible by previous theological alienation.

Various ingredients and driving forces in Christian anti-Jewish doctrines can be found. The Jews have always been and remain a *mysterium tremendum et fascium* to the Christian Church. Christian anti-Judaism appears in a much sharper light when compared to its antecedents.

Christianity did not inherit the anti-Jewish arguments of pagan antiquity: those were different in origin.²⁸

Christianity, may have, since the second century, inherited some of the pagan anti-Jewish sentiments; its dogmas, however, made no use of pagan anti-Jewish propaganda.

Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote that "Moses... introduces new laws contrary to those of the rest of mankind. Whatever is sacred to us, it is profane to them; and what they concede, we regard as sacrilege... They are of rebellious spirit and of hatred of the human race." ²⁹

The Church position was that the Jews were to be tolerated by the Church on the condition that they play the role of slave and fossil.³⁰ Throughout the Middle Ages, the Jews were seen and saw themselves as "prisoners of war" on alien soil.³¹

The turning point in the history of Christian anti-Jewish doctrines came at a crucial moment of Jewish life in Europe, during the twelfth century. Anti-Jewish doctrines changed in quality and in quantity. Not only did they increase, they also changed pattern. The new patterns created were to last to the eighteenth century.

The Jewish image was dehumanized. Jews became a mysterious people not of the Bible but of the Talmud. Jews were incomprehensible and dangerous.

Modern Anti-Semitism and Christian Tradition

How much was the rise of modern anti-Semitism rooted in Christian tradition? Anti-Semitic propaganda, whether extreme or moderate, had one outstanding feature. Its target was not so much the traditional Orthodox Jew,

who is recognizable as such. The anti-Semites fought the modern Jew- the Jew who in disguise penetrated the society to disrupt its healthy culture. Whether assimilated or not, however, the Jew remained an alien, dangerous and disintegrating force. Being Jewish was a character indecibilis, unchangeable by baptism or other external signs of changed identity. Therefore, the first political aim of the anti-Semites was to undo the original sin of the nineteenth century Europe; to revoke the legal emancipation granted to Jews and by discrimination, make the Jews recognizable again. Most extreme anti-Semites in the nineteenth century called not only for the annulment of emancipation, but for expulsion and genocide.³²

Why the Jews ?

In searching for the origin of the Holocaust, some historians raised the question why were the Jews singled out as the main target of hostilities ?

In searching for an answer , some historians point out that while the Jews were given equal rights in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, they could never fully integrate into German society. One reason was that the Germans believed that " German " and " Christian " to be anonymous; a Jew , therefore, never could be considered a "true" German.³³

Racial anti-Semitism and the subsequent Nazi movement were the result not of mass hysteria or the work of a single propagandist. The racial anti-Semites, despite their antagonism toward traditional Christianity learned much from it, and succeeded in providing a well prepared systematic ideology with a logic of its own that reached its culmination in the Third Reich.

Anti-Semitism, according to some historians is thought to reach back at least to the fall of Judea in 586 BC. In anti-Semitic interpretation when the

Jews were dispersed, they took with them their relatively rigid and embedding customs. Dietary laws prohibited them from eating with others; intermarriage was forbidden. They were by their own prophet Jeremiah considered "stiff-necked".

In Greece and in Rome Judaism seemed to be absolute in its theology, ethnic customs and rites.

In early Christianity the epithet of "Christ killer" was sufficient cause for scapegoating the Jew on any and all occasions. By the time of John Chrysostom (4th Century) elaborate anti-Semitic homilies were preached, accusing the Jews not only of the crucifixion but of all other conceivable crimes as well.

Support of anti-Semitism was drawn from straight Christian theological reasoning. Some scholars stress the religious factor in anti-Semitism, for the Jews are above all else a religious group.³⁴

Looking backward over the historical course of events, another consideration is of importance. Lacking a homeland, the Jews were regarded by many as parasites upon the body politics.³⁵

The commitment of the Nazi leadership to the killing of the Jews within the sphere of their influence did not come out of the void. It resulted from the unique amalgamation of several traditions and ideas of Christian anti-Semitism, racism, and conservative tendencies- within the context of a political and institutional framework.

History of Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism had a long history going back to the pre-Christian era. It changed and adapted itself to political and social changes. Different modes of anti-Semitism have evolved over time, with older forms, however, not

dying out but coexisting with modern ones. In the pre-Christian antiquity, it was based on " certain peculiarities of morals and behavior expressly imposed by the Old Testament" ³⁶

There was a special Egyptian strain of anti-Semitism. For example, the Egyptian myth of the Exodus differs from the Old Testament account of depicting the Jews in negative terms and arguing that it was the Egyptians who sought to get rid of the Jews as an unacceptable leprous people. ³⁷

Christianity's perception of the Jew as " Christ killer " has been central for anti-Semitism throughout the ages.

In the eighteenth century Voltaire, the great thinker of the Enlightenment, continued to perpetuate the old stereotype of the Jew as usurious and greedy, iniquitous, clever, and ruthless. ³⁸ Ironically, Voltaire also held the Jews guilty of fathering Christianity. Voltaire declared that "when I see Christians cursing Jews, methinks I see children beating their fathers." ³⁹

In the nineteenth century Heinrich von Treitsche, a leading historian and anti-Semite, argued " that the Jews should convert to Christianity as a way of becoming good Germans. Germans cannot accept the Jews as members of their nation." ⁴⁰

Anthropological concepts of race became wedded to anti-Semitic ideas to create a new definition of the Jew. The essence of racist doctrine was that racially flawed individuals cannot change their nature by conversion and therefore present a constant danger to the nation. Count Arthur de Gobineau's mid-nineteenth-century essay on the Inequality of the Human Race not only differentiated between the quality of races but stated that race provided the clue to human history. Social purity produced cultural creativity, whereas cultural decline and decadence were product of intermingling.

World conspiracy theories of the Jews also became part of anti-Semitic

myths. Osman Bey wrote in his World Conquest of the Jews (1840):

.. a Jewish parliament was summoned in Cracow. It was sort of Ecumanical Council, where the most eminent leaders of the Cursed People met to convene. The purpose of the summoning them was to determine the most suitable mean to ensure that Judaism should spread from the North Pole to the south... It was the voice of recognized authority, people saw that and oracle had spoken, that a new illumination had dawned upon the minds to give them directions to their efforts."⁴¹

The way was prepared for the famous Russian forgery, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion (1903), widely circulated in the 1920's and in the 1930's.

Throughout the eighteenth century anti-Semitism has been a religious, intellectual and social viewpoint. By the second half of the nineteenth century it had also become in Germany and in the Hapsburg monarchy political. Integral nationalism advocated that the Jews cannot be and are not eligible for membership in the German nation. Jews were the "undesirable" element of the society.

In early and medieval Christianity the Jewish minority was tolerated on the condition, that, politically and socially it remained on parish. Jews could continue to live as a negative witness to the victory of Christianity. The Jews were never permitted to transcend the status of strangers, who, once their service was deemed unnecessary or their usefulness became outweighed by other, notably religious consideration, could be dispersed with, expelled or physically destroyed. The perennial role of the Jews as an outcast gave them the image of an almost inhuman being, an image reflected in the connotation of the name "Jew" in all European languages of the late Middle Ages.⁴²

Modern Racial Anti-Semitism

In modern racial anti-Semitism Jews were labeled as an inferior race and not only a religion. In racial anti-Semitism the once spiritual impurity ascribed to Jews by Christians had been turned into an indelible and incurable character defect, and the presence of Jews in a non-Jewish society appeared intolerable. In the nineteenth century Eugen Dühring in Germany, Eduard Dumont in France, Gyozo Istoczy in Hungary, did not limit their commendation to the restriction of Jewish rights. They spoke openly about expatriation and extermination.⁴³

Because of the similarity between the conclusions of these ideologues and the ideology of the Nazis, these anti-Semites are often considered as the precursors and forerunners of Nazism. The Nazis themselves indeed recognized their indebtedness to anti-Semites of earlier generations in attempting to build up their pedigree that would ensure historical continuity of their movement in German national history.⁴⁴

The thinking of the late nineteenth century anti-Semites like Dühring had a demonstrable bearing on the emergence of Nazism. Dühring revealed an almost morbid hatred against the Jews and a radical denial of anything reminiscent of Judaism. Committed as Dühring was to a Darwinian concept of human history, he affirmed the right of the strong and biologically healthy to destroy the weak and feeble. Conceptually the ideas of Dühring are far-reaching in their anticipation of Nazi identity.

It was, however, the relentless determination of Hitler and the Nazis to put the right of the State behind the ideas of the anti-Semitic tradition in its most radical version that produced the Holocaust.⁴⁵

Hitler and Anti-Semitism

Hitler was a student of history. He was aware that for many centuries primitive Christian Europe had regarded the Jews as the "Christ killer", an enemy and a threat to be converted and to be "saved" or to be killed, to be expelled or to be put to death with sword and fire. In 1543 Martin Luther set out his "honest advise" as to how the Jews should be treated. First he wrote that "their synagogues should be set on fire, and whatever did not burn should be covered or spread over with mud and dirt so that no one may ever able to see a cinder or stone of it." Jewish homes, Luther urged, should likewise be "broken down or destroyed; Jews should then be put under one roof, or in a stable, like Gypsies, in order that they may realize, that they are not the masters in our land. They should be put to work, to earn their living by the seat of their noses or, if regarded even then too dangerous, these poisonous bitter worms should be striped of their belongings, which they extorted usuriously from us and driven out of the country for all times."⁴⁶

Luther's advise was typical of the anti-Jewish venom of his time. Mass expulsion was a commonplace of medieval policy. In Italy Jews were confined a special part of towns, the Ghetto, and in Tsarist Russia to a special region of the country, "The Pale of Settlement." Jews were accused of killing Christian children in order to use their blood in baking the Passover bread. The "blood libel", coming with popular outbursts against the Jews, reflected deep prejudices and anti-Semitism.

In 1920 the New Socialist German Workers Party, the Nazi party, [after the first syllables of National- Nazional in German] published a twenty-five-points program. The Nazi party at that time had sixty members, Hitler among them.

Point Four of the program stated that "... none but the members of the

Nation may be citizens of the State. None but those of the German blood, whatever their creed, may be a member of the Nation." Another point demanded that all Jews who had come to Germany since 1914 should be forced to leave; a demand which would effect more than eighteen thousand Jews.⁴⁷

Hitler became a propagandist for the Nazi Party. He traveled and spoke all over Germany, and especially in Bavaria. On August 13, 1920 Hitler addressed a crowd at Munich at a beer cellar. During his speech he promised his listeners that his party, and his party alone, will "free the Germans from the poisons of the Jews." "There must be", Hitler said, "a new slogan, and one not only for Germany- Anti-Semites of the World, Unite! People of Europe, Free Yourselves!" and Hitler demanded what he called a thorough solution, in brief "the removal of Jews from the midst of our[German] people."⁴⁸

Nazism , Climax of Anti-Semitism

In a way, the Nazi German destruction of European Jewry was the climax of previous anti-Jewish ideologies, policies, and actions. For many centuries, and in many countries, the Jews have been victims of destructive actions.

The first anti-Jewish policy started in the fourth century after Christ in Rome. In the early 300's, during the reign of Constantine, the Christian Church gained power in Rome and Christianity became the state religion. From that period the state carried out the Church policy. For the next twelve centuries, the Catholic Church proscribed measures that were to be taken with respect to the Jews. Among these measures were the policy of expulsion- from England, France, Spain and Portugal. The expulsion and exclusion

policies were adopted by the Nazis and remained the goal of all anti-Jewish activity until 1941.

In addition to expulsion and exclusion, an additional anti-Jewish policy of the Nazis was that the Jews have to be killed. This policy was implemented in the Holocaust.

Thus, it is clear that the Holocaust did not come out of a void. The road to the Holocaust was paved with three goals of anti-Jewish measures of centuries as outlined earlier in this chapter: "The missionaries of Christianity had said: The Jews have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular rulers who followed proclaimed that the Jews have no right to live among their nation. The German Nazis decreed that the Jews have no right to live."

The German Nazis built upon the past. They completed the development of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

A comparison of Christian and Nazi anti-Jewish measures shows shocking similarities.

Hitler and Nazism,
the Savors of Mankind

Nazi anti-Semitism was also inspired by the writings of Stewart Houston Chamberlain. Chamberlain promoted the idea of a "German religion". This religion, in the view of Chamberlain, was a monopoly of the "Aryan race-soul". Chamberlain transferred Christ into an Aryan prophet. Christ's disposition- wrote Chamberlain- revealed an Aryan soul, for Christ exemplified love, compassion, and honor, and his soul was avoid of materialism.. Chamberlain claimed that at the time of Jesus the only people who lived in Galilea, at Christ's birthplace, were an Aryan people and not Jews. According to Chamberlain, the Germanic race entered history as

the savior of mankind and the heirs to the greatness of the Greeks and Romans. The real enemy of the Aryan was the Jew. Chamberlain saw in the Jews an Asian people, who entered European history at the same time as the Germans, and like the Germans had managed to preserve their racial purity. Chamberlain held that the Jewish soul was materialistic, legalistic, and devoid of tolerance and morality, drawing on the Old Testament as his proof.⁴⁹

The Jews in racial anti-Semitism have evil social characteristics. The "Judaes Perversus" of earlier Christianity soon became the perverse racial type of Jew who formed the subject of modern caricatures. The Jew ceased to be a mere dogmatic concept and became a synonym of all that is bad and contemptible in the world. The Jew became a physical entity, a definite human type whose characteristics would be defined even measured. His characteristic appearance, his build features, his crooked nose and gestures could be visually described and pictured in a general manner easily recognizable by all. The Jewish stereotype, created in the course of many generations as a result of the interaction of dogma and reality, was proved with a "scientific" basis by racial anti-Semitism. This development removed the basic principle from the Christian theory about the Jews. From now on, the Jew was considered accursed from the dawn of ages until the end of the world. No amount of education could overcome the eternal barrier of race. Assimilation would only poison the healthy body of the nations by the penetration of parasitic elements. The obvious conclusion, drawn without shame or inhibition from these pseudo-scientific premises, was that there really was no longer any room for the Jews within the nations. The only solution was the removal of the Jews by concentrating them in their own country, or even better and more logically, by annihilating them.⁵⁰

These alternative possibilities were suggested by most anti-Semitic theories of the nineteenth century. Repeatedly the Jews are compared with

germs and bacili. For many years Jews were called such names as "germs, parasites, vermin, which must be exterminated", just as Jews earlier had been called the Children of Satan who must be fought. This language was adopted by the Nazis too. Nazi anti-Semitism inherited the myth about Judaism and Jews of the Church. There is mounting evidence that from Hitler down to the average German there was an acute awareness of the essentially religious nature of their anti-Semitism. Hitler referred in conversations admiringly to Aquina's and Luther's brand of anti-Semitism. He expressed his admiration for the anti-Jewish ideas of Pope Gregory VII (who forbade "the synagogues of Satan"), John Chrysostom and others. On April 26, 1933 Hitler in his meeting with Bishop Berning and Mgr. Steinman said: "Perhaps I am doing Christianity a great service"; the prelates said nothing.⁵¹

Many anti-Semites emphasized that they were good Christians. The motto of the Sturmer magazine was a statement by Church Father Cyprian: "The Bible itself says that the Jews are an accursed people; the devil is the father of the Jews."⁵²

Nazism and Christianity shared the desire to condemn the Jews. Some scholars believe that Christian mythology thinking about Jews is even more radical than the Nazi interpretation for the Nazis attempted to destroy the Jews on this earth, whereas Christian theologians would condemn Jews for eternal damnation.⁵³

The deadly myths about Jews sanctioned by the Church and the Nazis taught the murderers of Jews that the actions of killing of Jews were just. Perhaps, that is what Hitler meant, when he claimed to be doing the Lord's work.⁵⁴

Ideological Roots of Nazi anti-Semitism

The ideological roots of Nazism and Nazi anti-Semitism go back to pre-war Germany. They lay, firstly, in the new wave of anti-Semitism, which began with the great depression of 1873-1896, and secondly in the emergence of a new radical form of right-wing movements which began in the 1890s.

Pre-war German anti-Semitism appealed to those social and economic elements whose lives were being most seriously disrupted by economic and social changes. Toward the end of the nineteenth century a new pseudo-biological form of anti-Semitism began to appear which defined the Jews not in term of religion, but as distinct, biologically determined and inferior race. By the end of the century the racist form of anti-Semitism also played a role in biological theories. There was a growing literature mostly in pamphlet form, which described the Jews as a parasitic race, acting as an element of decomposition within their host nations, and engaged in a conspiracy to achieve world domination.

This biological theory had important implications for the position of the individual Jew. For since the Jews were biologically a distinct race, their evil nature was inherent in each individual Jew. Just as it was impossible for a leopard to change its spots, so it was impossible for a Jew to cease being a Jew *i.e.* evil. By definition there could be no such a thing as a good Jew. Racist anti-Semites draw conclusions from the racial premises. The Hamburg programme of the "Union of Anti-Semite Parties", formed in 1899, stated that "since the Jewish question in the course of the twentieth century will become a question of world significance, it must be finally solved by the separation and finally the extermination of the Jewish people."⁵⁵

Anti-Semitism has been accepted as the essential component of a new definition of German nationalism which had become dominating in 1914. The new populist (*Folkisch*) form of nationalism emerged during the 1890s and radicalized German right-wing politics. From the autumn of 1917 onwards, anti-Semitism came to play an increasing role in Pan-German propaganda until, by the spring of 1918, it had become a key factor. On April, 1918, at a meeting of the executive committee of the Pan-German League, Heinrich Class noted a satisfactory growth in the anti-Semitic world which had already reached an enormous extent and defined that "our task will be to bring this movement out and to the national political arena... for the Jews the struggle of existence has begun."⁵⁶

On October 1920, 1918, Class concluded his remarks, which follows a German dictum referred previously to the French and now to be referred to the Jews calling on his listeners to "... strike them dead; at the Last Judgement you will not be asked for your reasons."⁵⁷

Anti-Semitism as the Core of Nazi Ideology

Anti-Semitism was at the core of Nazi ideology in general and of Hitler's own view in particular. It expressed a vision of a cosmic racial struggle in which the Jew, representing the forces of darkness, were pitted against the Aryan forces of light of whom the German people were the standard-bearers.⁵⁸

This ideology was reinforced in the writing of Houston Stewart Chamberlain in his book The Foundation of Nineteenth Century. Chamberlain in his last chapter of the book moves into vulgar anti-Semitism which led in the end to the obscenities of Julius Streicher's

caricatures of the Jews in the Sturmer magazine in Hitler's time. Indeed a good deal of the "philosophical basis" of Nazi anti-Semitism stems from Chamberlain. Publication of the Foundation of the Nineteenth Century created something of a sensation. Within a year it had gone through eight editions and sold 60,000 copies and by the time of the outbreak of World War I in 1914 it had reached a sale of 100,000. It flourished again in the Nazi time and in 1938 it had its 28th edition, by which time it has been sold more than a quarter of million copies.⁵⁹ Chamberlain's influence on the Third Reich was significant. His racial theories and his burning sense of destiny of the Germans were taken over by the Nazis, who acclaimed him as one of their prophets. During the Hitler regime books, pamphlets and articles poured from the presses entolling the "spiritual founder" of National Socialist Germany. It is likely that Hitler first learned of Chamberlain's writings before he left Vienna, for they were very popular among the Pan-German and anti-Semitic groups to whose literature Hitler was exposed in those early days.⁶⁰

The persistence of anti-Semitism has been manifest for more than two millenia. The New Testament mythology of Jesus produced Christian anti-Semitism. The perfect goodness of the Jesus figure in Christian theology was totally dependent on the opposite evil representation of the Jew. Christianity incorporated two opposed images of good and evil symbolized by Jesus and by his Jewish antagonists. Christianity perpetuated this dualism by discovering the role of Jesus in the drama of good and evil being played out in history and society.⁶¹

The divided Christian conscience survived the Enlightenment's critique of religion. The secular conscience articulated by Kant, Rousseau, Voltaire and other philosophers inherited the polar images of Jesus and the Jews from Christianity. Since the Enlightenment thinkers stressed the

humanity of Jesus more than his divinity the criticism of Jews could become a dynamic technique for political power. The figure of Jesus was abstracted in the form of suffering humanity. The image of humanity crucified by Jewish capital became an irresistible force in messianic politics.⁶²

Voltaire, one of the most influential philosophers of the Enlightenment, was an obsessive hater of Jews. Voltaire believed that the Jews could not fit humanity, as the Jews are sinners against humanity.

Germans the New Chosen People ;
Hitler the New " Jesus"

After Voltaire, some consider Richard Wagner the most influential figure in the development of modern anti-Semitism prior to the rise of Nazism.⁶³ Wagner as a child of the Enlightenment interpreted the Gospels as the drama of the innocent child of nature, Jesus, against Jewish religious hypocrisy. The goodness and generosity were inherited in the heart of man, and this noble sentiment the Jews had attempted to pervert through their religion. This war of the Jews against humanity in the form of its ideal representation was proof of the differentiation of humanity into racial groups. The race that demonstrated the greatest devotion to the struggle against the Jews was, therefore, the truest embodiment of the Jesus figure. The election of one nation was manifest through its resolve against the Jews.⁶⁴

Wagner, encouraged by pseudo-scientific theories about the superiority of the Aryan race, created his own mythology claiming for the Germans the title of the Chosen People. The replacement of the Jews that Voltaire attempted through the idea of transcendent humanity, Wagner pressed through the image of a chosen race. The conception of Voltaire and

Wagner were intensively anti-Jewish because their construction of identity required the principle of election, and, therefore, they both negated the election of the Jews. They mocked the Jewish idea of a Chosen People, and attributed it as a deformity in the character of the Jews.⁶⁵

The idea of the Aryan Jesus gained prominence in Germany in the 19th century. The Aryan Jesus signified the total identification of Jesus as the ideal type of the master race. The mobilization of the master race could then be nothing less than the reactivating of the New Testament struggle of Jesus against the Jews.⁶⁶

Nazi ideology was the product of total racial identification with a savior figure in mortal opposition to Jewish authority. Hitler also suggests the destiny of the Germans; in the racially chosen people lies the salvation of the world through complete vengeance against the Jews.⁶⁷

Modern Anti-Semitism

Labels Jews as Semitic Race

Heir to medieval anti-Semitism, modern anti-Semitism made Judaism a race. Until modern times Judaism was considered a religion, and its adherent members of the white race. Under the influence of Aryanism, the Jews were considered Semites, members of an inferior race. From this perspective, no matter what the Jews did they were thought to be great danger to the Aryan Christian West.

The anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century drew its inspiration from a rejection of modernity, which was identified with the Jews as much by the Right as by the Left. The rise of the totalitarian movements in Europe (facism and Nazism) constituted a decisive point in the history of anti-Semitism. Racial theories became an integral part of the political system.

Facism and Nazism appealed in different forms to the racial mystique. In Germany the Weimar Republic was considered a *Judenrepublik* (a Jewish Republic). The Jews were blamed for the loss of the War. Marshall Ludendorff, the German military hero, wrote in 1923 that " those who enjoyed and profited from the War were especially the Jews ; patriotic circles felt that the German people, who with weapons in hand, fought for liberty, had been sold out and betrayed by the Jewish people. "68

Nazism emerged under explosive political-economic context. Its first program, adopted in 1920, already proclaimed that " no Jew can be a racial brother." As an alien group that was radically foreign to German mentality, the Jews constituted a moral peril in the Nazi mind. By mixing with the Aryan race they soiled it. But above all the Jews were carrying out a diabolical plot against the World. From this perspective, every problem was automatically ascribed to the evil doing of international Jewry.

Nazi Ideologists Defame Jews

These themes , which were widely developed in Hitler's Mein Kampf were adopted by Nazi ideologists, especially Alfred Rosenberg in The Myth of the Twentieth Century and Julius Streicher in his newspaper , Der Sturmer.

The mythification of imaginary fears found its most typical expression in The Myth of The Twentieth Century by Rosenberg (published in 1930). To Rosenberg race was the " soul of extension, the inconceivable sum total of all the currents of ego, people, community; its mythos." " A nation's mythos is", according to Rosenberg, " its creative and conservative force. This theory is applied also to the Jewish question. ... Not only a creative dream image develops such immense power. The Jewish parasitical dream of world

dominion has also generated an immense, though destructive force. In over three thousand years this mystical belief supported black magicians of politics and economics. ... Goethe had initially defined this force when he created the character of Mephistopholis. Today it was embodied in the masters of grain and diamond exchanges, of the world press and of the League of Nations diplomacy." 69

Rosenberg also wrote that " whenever a wound is torn in the body of the nation, there the Jewish demon eats into the sick flesh and in parasitic fashion exploits the greats of the world during their hour of weakness... Parasitism is the Jews' very nature. This concept is no moral appraisal rather than a definition of a fundamental biological fact., in the very sense in which we speak of parasitical phenomena of any plant and animals." 70

Conclusion

The evolution of anti-Semitism throughout the ages from pagan times to Christian theology, doctrines of the Enlightenment, narrow minded nationalism, racial and biological hatred, led to the tragic Nazi Holocaust.

Hatred and prejudice triumphed over humanity. The new mortality of the twentieth century was return to barbarism. The new morality granted the stronger race the right to destroy the weaker, the innocent, the children. The ethical and moral conscience of the world was silenced and was silent during the Holocaust.

Anti-Semitism led to man's inhumanity against man causing great suffering and cruelties, expulsions, massacres and ultimately to the Holocaust, the great human tragedy.

Notes

- 1 Well known saying
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- 5 Rubinstein, op. cit. p. 10
- 6 Ibid
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- 8 Ibid
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- 10 Auschwitz- Beginning of A New Era-Reflections on the Holocaust- Fleischner, Eva, Ed.-New York: Ktav Publishing, 1974, p. 75
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CHAPTER 2

The Rise of Nazism and Hitler

In 1933 the Nazi Party came to power and Adolf Hitler became the chancellor and later on the Fuhrer of the Third Reich. Anti-Semitism was given an essential role within the Nazi ideological system and Hitler's deeply seated hatred of Jews determined many actions and policies of the Third Reich.

The racist anti-Semitism of the Nazis, with its phantasmagoric view of the Jews as deadly bacillus and "poisoner" of the nation, throughout its zealous propaganda affected the German public attitudes. After 1933 Nazi anti-Semitic doctrines became an article of faith, the policy of the ruling Nazi Party and state institutions, one of the ideological pillars of "The New Order for Europe" of the Nazis.¹

The Nazis after coming to power felt free to implement their anti-Semitic programme, step by step, through a series of stages from legal discrimination, expropriation, forced emigration and then ghettoization to the mass extermination undertaken during Second World War. Before the "Kristallnacht" Pogrom of November 1938, the Nazis concentrated on removing all Jews from public life and German cultural life. Drastic measures of Nuremberg Laws of 1935 effectively introduced apartheid between Germans and Jews. Through massive indoctrination and newspapers like Der Sturmer a poisonous brew of anti-Semitic hatred, sadism and perversion was served up to the German people, warning them against international Jewish machinations and racial defilement through sexual contact with the Jews and zealously encouraging economic boycott of Jewish businesses.²

The pogrom of "Kristallnacht" in 1938- the most violent display of anti-Semitism in modern German history - marked a watershed on Hitler's road to the "Final Solution ." An orderly, legislative and bureaucratic method of resolving the "Jewish Question " was for the moment abandoned, the seizure of Jewish property and total exclusion of Jews from the German economy was accelerated and the violence of the SS unleashed without restraint. Every synagogue in Germany was burned down or demolished, over 30,000 Jewish men were seized and sent to the concentration camps of Buchenwald, Dachau and Sachsenhausen, and several hundred Jews were murdered or severely hurt. Cruelty, terror, and hunting of Jews became rampant. All Jewish enterprises were to be taken over by State-trustees and sold to Aryans, the owners receiving merely book-writing securities bearing fixed interest. The questions of extending the forced labor decrees to the Jews, of confining them to ghettos, of banning their children from German schools were to be examined by committees. There was to be an immediate community fine of a thousand million marks, there was to be a new drive for Jewish emigration and the damage alone in the pogrom was to be paid by the Jews themselves without benefit of insurance.³

On "Kristallnacht" fires were ignited all over Germany, and the shattered plate glass that was to give its name littered the streets of German towns and cities. It was later estimated that the amount of plate-glass destroyed equaled half of the annual production of the plate-glass industry of Belgium, from which it had been imported. Over several thousand businesses were destroyed. David H. Buffur, the American Consul General in Leipzig, Germany, described one of the sadistic amusements : " They demolished dwellings and hurled most of the moveable effects to the streets, the sadistic perpetrators threw many of the trembling inmates into a small stream that flows through the Zoological Park, commanding the cheering spectators to

spit at them, defile them with mud and jeer their plight."⁴

In announcing the thousand million mark fine Goering remarked :
 "That will work. The pigs will not commit another murder. I would like to say that I would not like to be a Jew in Germany now. The second point is this : If in the near future the German Reich should come into conflict with foreign Powers, it goes without saying that we in Germany would first of all let it come to be a reckoning with the Jews."⁵

On January 30, 1939, Hitler made his victorious Reichstag speech :
 "Today I will be once more a prophet: If the Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nation once more into a world war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."⁶

The Nazionalist Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi) was formed in 1919 by a small group whose seventh member was Adolf Hitler. The party dedicated itself to the rebirth of the German nation along totalitarian and racial lines.

From the start the Nazi party pursued a strong anti-Semitic policy and in 1920 incorporated seven planks in its platform which, in sum, called for denial of citizenship and public office to Jews, expulsion of Jews who had immigrated into Germany since 1914, expulsion of Jews from the press, and categorizing all German Jews as " foreigners " and " guests " of the nation.

Throughout the twenties the rise of the Party paralleled a tragic decline of Jewish affairs. Nazi ruffians roamed the streets agitating against Jews, singing anti-Semitic songs and daubing Jewish property with obscenities. Anti-Semitic pamphlets proliferated. The Jewish Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic, Walter Rathenau, was murdered in 1922 by two zealots who fancied that Rathenau was one of the " Elders of Zion ". Between 1923 and 1932 one hundred and twenty Jewish cemeteries and fifty

synagogues were desecrated. Jews were gradually elbowed out of the economic and social life, while a species of " re-ghettoizing " was effected. On another level there was the cultural attack. Jewish artists and writers were openly derided ; and a movement was launched to establish a teutonic neo-paganism in the place of Christianity as well as of Judaism.⁷

The victorious advance of Nazism was due , more than to any other factor, to its evil leader, Adolf Hitler. Hitler added little that was original to the Nazi Party ideology but reinforced its anti-Semitism with a fanaticism he had nurtured in Vienna. In 1923, after an unsuccessful putch, Hitler wrote in the jail of Munich the Nazi bible, Mein Kampf.

Though it had many precursors in the previous ages, Hitlerian anti-Semitism was something beyond the older kinds. The Nazi radical and uninhibited Jew-hatred was preached with a boundless fury and coarseness. No longer was the Jew a mere scapegoat, or a member of an inferior race, but the cause of every problem, the destroyer, the poisoner of Aryan blood, the epitome of evil. All this was in the Jew inheritantly and uneradicably; neither baptism, nor renunciation of Judaism could redeem the Jew. The solution to the Jewish problem was simple, and concisely summarized in the Nazi slogan - " *Juda Verrecke !* " (Jewry Perish !) :

With the Nazis' and Hitler's assumption of power in March 1933, the Jewish agony increased, taking the form of progressive terror which stretched over twelve years. Before 1933 was over German Jews were a community of " despairing men, weeping women and terror stricken children."⁸

In 1935 the Nuremberg Laws, announced at a Nazi rally, cancelled the citizenship all Jews, forbade marriage and sexual relationships between Jews and Aryans as well as the employment of by Jews of Aryan women under the age of forty five.¹⁰

Extraordinary efforts were made by the Nazi propaganda ministry to mask the brutalities against the Jews or to give them an accuracy of rationality. In addition the Propaganda Minister of the Third Reich, Joseph Goebbels's outpouring to the German masses - through the press, pamphlets, schools, and speakers' platforms-propaganda on a "scientific" level was organized under Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg set up to using the intellectuals indoctrinating the ongoing generations, and to prepare Nazi anti-Semitism for export. Professors were appointed in the universities to lecture on the science of 'race' and supposed ascendancy of the Aryan over the Jewish race, spirit and scholarship. A number of research projects on Judaism and Jewry were established and an Institute of Research on Judaism featured a library of 350,000 volumes on Judaism amassed for documenting anti-Semitic measures and laws. The little difficulty the Nazis had in founding their 'science of race' among so many German intellectuals and scientists forms a melancholy chapter in the history of this macabre period. The cowardice of the intellectual community accounts to a considerable extent for the acquiescence of the German people to Nazi standards.¹¹

In Germany of the thirties anti-Jewish riots, often ensuing from a Nazi speech or rally were frequent, and Jews were humiliated at every turn. New and newer measures were taken. How ridiculous it sound now that Jews in Germany were forbidden to play the music of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and other German composers. The Jews were required to add the name of "Israel" and "Sarah" to their names on all records. A rewriting of history was undertaken by a "race bureau" which tied all the misfortunes of history to the Jews. Anti-Semitic handbooks were distributed to teachers.¹²

Many anti-Semitic measures that were introduced by the Nazis in 1933 and in the following years have originated in past centuries: the separation of Jews from non-Jews, the exclusion of Jews from professions and studies, the

special taxes, the burning of books and the wearing of the yellow badge.

In Mein Kampf of Hitler nearly every page contained the idea that the Jews were the cause of evil in the world, of the Treaty of Versailles, venereal diseases, capitalism and Bolshevism, social injustice and cultural decay.

The Views of the Nazis and Hitler of the Jewish Problem

At glance Hitler's writing and speeches show that there were two Jewish problems, and although Hitler entangled them together, they demanded quite separate treatment. Firstly, there was the conspiracy of World Jewry by which Hitler meant the power Jews had in international finance to do Germany harm. Jewry had lined the forces of the world against the Kaiser, it had created the Diktat of Versailles, it had excluded Germany from national markets and by an unholy alliance with Bolshevism it had cheated Germany of her territorial claims. Secondly, there was a sub-human Jewry, the proletarian Jewish masses spreading westward from the reservoir of Eastern Europe which had contaminated German blood and would still do so, unless checked. 13

Racial purity was a major plank in the Nazi platform. Based on the principles of Social Darwinism national selection and the survival of the fittest the aim was to make room for the so-called Nordic-Aryan race, especially as embodied in the German people, so it could achieve its rightful domination on earth.

The Jews were singled out as the most virulent threat so that Hitler could pointing at them as instigating World War II. German propaganda described the Jews as parasites, vermin, beast of prey- in a word subhuman, masked behind an intensive cunning that was all too successful of destroying

German political and economic life, and bore responsibility for Germany's defeat a generation earlier.¹⁴ As the Nazis entrenched their position their Jewish policy went into effect. It involved: restriction of civil liberties and professional opportunities for Jew; impoverishment through confiscation of property; outright expulsion of non-German Jews; arousal of public sentiment against the Jews aimed at producing a climate so unpleasant as to make emigration the only option. Riots and violence against the Jews broke out culminating in "Kristallnacht" on November 9-10, 1938, when synagogues were burned, Jewish shops were looted and thousand of German and Austrian Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps.¹⁵

If "Kristallnacht" was the most volatile of the anti-Jewish events in pre-war Nazi Germany, the measures accomplished by legislative enactment and bureaucratic enforcement of the Nazi will were, if slower and less spectacular, more efficient and dependable in the long run. The Nuremberg Laws passed unanimously on September 13, 1935, were a case in point. First, the "Reich Citizenship Law" stated that German citizenship could belong only to those of "German or related blood." Henceforth, Jews were subjects only. Even blood, moreover, was not a sufficient condition. The state conferred citizenship by granting a certificate. Receipt and retention of citizenship depended less on an unalienable right and more on approved conduct. Second, a "Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor" prohibited marriage and sexual relationship between Jews and persons of "German or related blood." Forbidden were the employment in Jewish households of German females under the age of 45 years of age and the Jewish display of the Reich's flag.¹⁶

Such decrees put the Jews at the mercy of the German state, but the measures also needed a clear definition of what constituted being Jewish. The basic solution was to designate as Jews anyone having at least three full Jewish

grandparents. Also included were persons with two full Jewish grandparents and with any of the following features; belonging to the Jewish religious community as of September 15, 1935, or joining thereafter; being married to a Jew on that date or later; being born from a marriage contracted after September 15, 1935, in which at least one partner was a full or three-quarter Jew; or being born after July 31, 1936, as the illegitimate offspring of extramarital relations involving a full and three-quarter Jew.¹⁷

A footnote should be added to these decrees. By providing records of birth and baptism, the Christian churches in Germany facilitated the definitional procedures of the Nazis and therefore were implicated in the destruction process early on. Though unaware of the final solution in 1935, the churches nevertheless contributed to that end.¹⁸

Nazi ideology saw in the Jews the non-human anti-thesis to what it considered as the human ideal: the German Aryan. Nazism saw in the world victory of the Germanic Aryans not only a geopolitical necessity for the survival of the German race and its peoples, but a precondition for the continued existence of humankind. At the other pole stood the Jew, a Satanic element and a parasite one, both weak and contemptible, and yet also immensely powerful and absolutely evil.¹⁹

The Jew, though he looked human, was not; Jews controlled most of the world through their control of both capitalism and Bolshevism; only Germany and, and, to some extent, England were still outside their grasp. With the victory of the Jews not only the destruction of Germany was imminent, but of all humanity. Germany's war against its enemies, the Jews, was therefore waged for two complimentary reasons: the "positive" one for ensuring the victory of the Germanic people in Europe, and then in the entire world; and the "negative" one of defeating the Jewish Satan and his world government. The former was unattainable except through the latter.²⁰

In treatment of the Jews, the Nazis considered them the anti-race, Satan, bacteria, contamination of culture and mortal enemy of the Aryan people.

The Nazis saw the Jews as the central problem of world history. Upon the solution of the Jewish question depended the future of mankind. Unless International Jewry was defeated human civilization will not survive. The Nazi attitude towards the Jews was almost pseudo-religious.

The Nazis had a biological vision of Jews. Making use of the Darwinian term "selection", the Nazis sought to take over the functions of nature (natural selection) and God (" The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away") in orchestrating their own selections", their version of human evolution.²¹

In these biological visions the Nazis embraced versions of medieval mystical anti-Semitism but also a newer (nineteenth -century and twentieth century) claim to " scientific racism ." Dangerous Jewish characteristics could be linked with alleged data of scientific descriptions so that a "mainstream of racism " was formed from " the fusion of anthropology, eugenics, and social thought." The resulting " racial and social biology " could make vicious forms of anti-Semitism intellectually respectable to learned men and women.²²

The Nazi state can be seen as a "biocracy". The model is theocracy, a system ruled by priests of a sacred order under the claim of divine prerogative. In the case of the Nazi biocracy, the divine prerogative was the cure through purification and revitalization of the Aryan race. Just as in theocracy, the state itself is no more than a vehicle for the divine purpose, so in the Nazi biocracy the state was no more than a means to achieve " a *mission of the German people on earth* ", that of " *assembling and preserving the most valuable stocks of racial elements in this (Aryan) people (and)*

raising them to a dominant position."²³ The Nazi biocracy differed from a classical theocracy in that the biological priests did not actually rule. The clear rulers were Adolf Hitler and his circle and not the biological theorists and doctors. Nazi ruling authority was maintained in the name of the higher biological principles.²⁴ Hitler's and the Nazis' approach to the Jews was racial and biological. Already in 1919 Hitler in a letter to Adolf Gemlich wrote that "anti-Semitism as a political movement should not and cannot be determined by factors of sentiment, but only by recognition of facts and these are the facts : to begin with , Jewry is unqualifiedly a racial association and not a religious association. Its influence will bring about the racial tuberculosis of the people. Hence it follows [that] anti-Semitism on purely emotional grounds will find its ultimate expression in the form of pogroms. Racial anti-Semitism, however, must lead to a systematic legal opposition and elimination of special privileges which the Jews hold, in contrast to other aliens living [among us] . Its final objective must unswervingly be the removal of the Jews altogether. Only a government of national vitality is capable of doing both, and never a government of national impotence."²⁵

To restore Germany to its former greatness, Hitler believed that the Jews had to be purged from the political and public life of the German nation and removed from all positions of political, social, or cultural influence.

On March 23, 1933, Hitler had by a policy of deceit and false assurances obtained a majority in the Reichstag to pass the Enabling Act, a law authorizing the government to issue legislation on its own responsibility, even if that legislation deviated from the Reich's Constitution. Thenceforth, the decrees which were promulgated by the German government adhered to the principles of National Socialist identity rather than the rules of law.²⁶

The Nazi ideology and Hitler's views were reflected in legislation. Hitler consistently portrayed the Jews as the most determined and sinister

enemies of the German and all other nations as well. Jews constantly undermined a people's capacity for struggle, weakened and subdued its racial purity, poisoned its institutions, and corrupted its positive qualities. The Jews were not a race but anti-race; they had no culture of their own, but purveyed such doctrines as democracy and parliamentarism which perverted or degenerated previously sound societies. Jews were constantly mingling with cultures, seeking to dissolve their structures and institutions. Marxism was but one of additional measures by which Jews conducted their relentless assault upon the societies and peoples of the world. Capitalism was another.²⁷

Jews posed a particular danger to the German people, for whom Hitler claimed to be a prophetic spokesman. Hitler and the Nazis associated the degeneration of Germany with the triumph of Jewry.²⁸

Some historians see National Socialist ideology as an assault upon "the roots of Western civilization, its basic values and moral foundations." As such, the Nazi counterrevolution was a "revolt against the all embracing idea of the unity of the human race." In this context, Judaism was conceived as the historical source and the continuous driving force of this idea, which was expanded in the course of universal history through Christianity and in the democratic and socialist systems.²⁹

Hitler and the Nazis believed that the Jew is, and remains the typical parasite, a sponger who like a noxious bacillus keeps spreading as soon as favorable medium invites him. And the effort of his existence is also like that of a sponger; where the Jew appears, the host people dies out after a shorter or longer period.³⁰

The Jews inhabited Hitler's and the Nazis' mind. They believed that the Jews were the source of all evil, misfortune, and tragedy, the single factor that like some inexorable law of nature, explained the working of the universe. The irregularities of war and famine, financial distress and sudden

death, defeat and sinfulness- all could be explained by the presence of that single factor-the Jew- in the universe, a miscreation that disturbed the world's steady ascent toward well being, affluence, success, victory. A savior was needed to come forth and slay the loathsome monster. In Hitler's mind the Jews were the demonic hoax whom he had been given a divine mission to destroy.³¹

All his life Hitler was seized with this obsession with the Jews. Even after the murder of 6,000.000 million Jews, he had still not exorcised his Jewish demon. At 4:00 A.M. on April 29, 1945, the last day of his life in the bunker of Berlin, Hitler finished his political testament. Hitler's last words to the German people were "Above all I charge the leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry."³²

The fate of the Jews under Nazism was unique. The Jews obsessed Hitler and the Nazis and the Jewish presence in Germany, their very existence preoccupied the policy makers of the German dictatorship. The "Judenfrage"-The Question of the Jews - riveted all Germany. The age-old heritage of anti-Semitism, compounded of Christian prejudices, economic rivalries, and social envy, was fanned by Nazi racism. Every German city, town and village applied itself to the Jews and the Jewish question with rampant violence and meticulous legalism.

Once the Nazis came to power, they incorporated their racial beliefs into law, in a short time enacting a major corpus of anti-Jewish legislation. The laws established legal definitions of the Jews and then, step by step, deprived the Jews of their rights, their property, and their livelihood. In times the Jews became segregated and ostracized from German society and were deprived the protection of the law even such as it was in Nazi

Germany.³³ Nationalist Socialist Germany's laws concerning Jews evolved into a most radical objective: total annihilation. Martin Borman, a top Nazi leader, described that " the Nationalist Socialist doctrine is entirely anti-Jewish which means anti-Communist and anti-Christian. Everything is linked within National Socialism at the fight against Judaism."³⁴

Questions by Historians on Nazism.

Some historians in retracing the twisted road of Nazi policies toward German Jews, 1933-1938, raise some major questions.

Did Hitler know, when he became Chancellor in 1933, what he hoped to accomplish concerning the Jewish question? Was the Holocaust the product of such a clearly conceived design? Or did Hitler, as some historians suggest, had his objectives defined even before 1933?

In looking for answers, reference can be made that as early as 1919, before joining the German Workers' Party, Hitler communicated to one of his superiors his views on the Jewish problem and his belief that " rational anti-Semitism must have as its fixed goal the removal of Jews altogether." By 1924, when Hitler wrote his Mein Kampf, he was clearly in possession of a full-blown " *Weltanschauung* " that had anti-Semitism as its center piece. Even gassing of Jews is mentioned in Mein Kampf. " If during World War", Hitler wrote, "Germany had placed twelve or fifteen thousand ... Hebrew corruptors of the people under poisonous gas, so they might have suffered at home what hundreds of thousands of German soldiers endured on the battlefield, the sacrifices of the front would not have been in vain."³⁵

The view that Hitler knew from the outset, possible as early as 1919, what the outline of a Jewish policy should be, can be fully and persuasively

argued. Hitler's 1919 letter, passages from Mein Kampf, and numerous other references before he became chancellor predicts the political realities of the German dictatorship under Hitler. When prefigurations are placed in the light of Hitler's subsequent warning on January 30, 1939, that if the Jews should "succeed in plunging that nations once more into a world war", the results would be "the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe", the argument that the Final Solution was the inevitable culmination of a grand design becomes all more persuasive.³⁶

Hitler and the Nazis came to power legally, exploiting the letter of the law to subvert the law. Sensible people were sure that Hitler and the Nazis could not last long, that decency, rationality and political order would-must-reassert themselves. No civilized nation, no rational people, it was held, could endure a mass hysteria as a substitute for parliamentarianism, the rule of terror instead the rule of law. But the Germans had entered upon a macabre era in which evil and irrational would reign for twelve endless years, in which a whole nation would be suborned. The frenzy of mass meetings would replace the decision in the voting booth, the fluttering flags would surplant political discussions. The rythm of the goose steps and the resonate of the "*Horst Wessel*" song, the cracking of terror in streets and the bloodshed of massacres would define the political character of the Nazi Third Reich. The Germans would live only by two principles alone : the rule of the Fuhrership and the dominion of race. They repudiated the Sixth Commandment- "You Shall Not Kill."³⁷

The dictatorship of Hitler and the Nazis came from the Enabling Act. No less than eight weeks after coming to power, Hitler had accomplished his "legal" revolution by terrorizing all parties. In July 1933 the Nazi Party was declared as the only political party to be in Germany.

Nazi Germany enacted some four hundred laws and decrees against

Jews, inexorably leading to the destruction of European Jewry.³⁸

The Nazi Instrument of the Final Solution- The SS

The instrument for the Final Solution of the Jewish question was the SS. In 1936, a standard lecture for SS units contained the following passage : "The Jew is a parasite. Wherever he flourishes the people die.. Elimination of the Jews from our community is regarded an emergency defense measure." The "right of emergency defense " was the title for the last chapter of Mein Kampf in which Hitler advocated the gassing of " twelve or fifteen thousand Jews." The SS text reveals the emerging role of the SS as an expression of Hitler's will and as the central aim in the " Final Solution of the Jewish Question." ³⁹

The SS began, as its name *Schutzstaffel* (Defense Corps) indicates, as an armed formation to protect the Fuhrer, top party leaders and party meetings. When Heinrich Himmler became the *Reichsfuhrer* of the SS he converted it into an elite brotherhood, selected according to racial criteria, permeated with racial mystique, using the symbols and practicing the rituals of teutonism. The most significant insignia of the SS was the death's head. When the Nazis came to power the SS had fifty thousand members. On the eve of the War, it had nearly a quarter of a million. High in the hierarchy of Nazi terror was the SS's *Sicherheitsdienst*- SD: Security Service. It grew into a surveillance system that encompassed all Germany and then all occupied Europe, an evil organizational eye whose vigilance no one could escape. ⁴⁰

The origin of the infamous *Gestapo* is in creating a Secret State Police Office (*Geheime Staatspolizei*amt) In 1934 Himmler appointed Heydrich

chief of the *Gestapo*. Now in control of all police apparatus of the various German states, Himmler and Heydrich would consolidate their enlarged position in both party and state undertakings to integrate the police organizations into the all-embracing work of the SS.⁴¹ The *Gestapo* later on was separated from the regular police and was assigned to deal with the "enemies of the state." In a few years the SS with its various branches became the instrumentality for the annihilation of the Jews.

By 1939, everything relating to the Jewish question had been deposed of, except the Jews themselves. On January 24, 1939, Goering gave Heydrich the power to take all measures for a stepped up forced emigration of the German Jews, along the line of Adolf Eichmann pioneered in Vienna after the *Anschluss*. SS terror was rampant there, and the Jews were its primary target; thousands of Jews were rounded up and incarcerated in Dachau, Buchenwald, and a new camp at Mauthausen in Austria; other thousands were forced to clean streets and public latrines. Eichmann offered "emigration" as an alternative to the terror. He reestablished the central organization that first he stopped in 1937, the *Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung* (Central Office for Jewish Emigration). For its successful operation, Eichmann also demanded the reestablishment of the *Jüdische Kulturgemeinschaft* (Jewish Cultural Community), which had been dissolved, and the release from detention of some Jewish communal leaders. With their cooperation procured by terror, Eichmann began to process the forcible exit of Jews from Austria. The application of apposite doses of terror and blackmail, coupled with the centralization of bureaucratic procedures, so successfully speeded up "emigration" that in about six months after the *Anschluss* 45,000 Jews had left Austria.⁴²

Eichmann's activities were closely observed in Germany. On January 24, 1939 by an order from Goering the Reich Central Office for Jewish

Emigration under the directorship of Heydrich was set up. Its object was to promote the "emigration" of Jews by "every possible measures."⁴³ In 1939 "emigration" was euphemism for "expulsion." Once World War II began "evacuation" became an euphemism for "deportation", which in time, signified transportation to a place of death.

What was Nazism
in Hitler's Mind?

From the outset of his political career, as well in Mein Kampf, Hitler defined Nazism as a "political article of faith."⁴⁴ Shortly before the Nazis seized power, Hendrick de Man, a Nazi ideologist, realized that the strength of the Nazi party resided in its ability to respond to the political and emotional needs of the masses during the critical days of the Weimar Republic. One such need was the "longing for myth and utopia", the demand for leadership personalities.⁴⁴

Hitler and the Nazis believed that it is their destiny to rule Europe; they believed in racial laws and the Germanization of Eastern Europe as a matter of faith; that faith was also expressed in negation of rationalism and Western culture together with its Christian sources, and the annihilation of the Jews as a symbol of that. The entire framework bore a mythological character that was presented as a political program to be carried out by rational technical means. The resulting ideology was expressed of a commander in the SS as follows: "...The myth is a humanization of the divine." The divine, however, has now become the final and unshakable humanization of the Reich's mystery. Hitler himself, even in the early years of the struggling movement, had defined the structure of Nazism in sacral-religious terms, as one in which faith (*Glauben*) preceded understanding (*Erkennen*.)⁴⁵

To see how the Nazi ideology created its substitute religion,, it is necessary to examine many sources, especially the material collected and produced by a number of special institutes established under the Third Reich for the study of the Jewish question. For instance, the communication of an institute investigating " the Jewish influence on German ecclesiastical life " contain important information. At its opening session in May 1939 its chief, *Obherregierungsrat* Leffler, explained that "an emancipation from enslavement and servitude of the German essence by Judaism as a result of the Nazi revolution must now be extended to the sphere of religious life, if the Jewish influence in Germany is to be completely broken. " 46

The Theology of Nazism

The Nazis created a new conception of God which becomes man in a political sense, as a member of the Aryan race whose highest representative on earth is the Fuhrer. Communication with the Fuhrer becomes communion. The transformation took place through public mass meetings staged and celebrated as sacred cults, as well through education, indoctrination, and the incalculations of discipline. All this was designed to achieve a personal identification with the Fuhrer as the Father of the State, the Son of the Race, and the Spirit of the Volk.⁴⁷

The concept of sin and redemption in the Nazi regime was in the hand of the State of the party, and it was used to convert man into a legal subject whose allegiance is assured by instilling in him a constant fear of deviating in any way from the official ideology. The Christian belief that man could be saved through faith in the forgiveness of Jesus who died for his "sins" so that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sins

(*Rom* 6:6) was transferred from theological to the secular political frame. Even the comforting assurance of the believer that his sins will be forgiven, and that he will be found worthy of receiving the purifying influence of grace, could now be gained only by his complete identification with the State, the party, and the superior Aryan race.⁴⁸

One of the most important documents giving Nazism a political sacred character can be found in a talk entitled "Die Autorität des Politischen" given to students in Berlin in 1932 by a Nazi ideologist, Marx Wundt. This speech was frequently used in anti-Semitic literature :

" The political purpose of the racial idea is to give the *volkish* experience of unity the power of a political faith... Only when we think and believe politically will the total absoluteness of the Reich idea... the all-embracing Germanization of the *Volks*-soul, become possible. The realm of the political is now sacred above all else, bringing us grace and liberation... From now on, gentlemen, once for all no more Jewish-Bolshevist Marxism, no leveling-down liberalism, no abstract conceptual rationalism ; we must stamp out the Judaizing of the German soul.. at stake from now on is the primary experience of Germany, the unshakable faith in the liberating mission of the *Führer*... The politically conscious National Socialist will free himself from paralyzing parliamentarism by his total commitment to the will of the *Führer*, of blood , of race... To act politically means to sever the Reich once and for all from the corrosive processes of Jewish Social Democracy.. The Reich must be completely cleansed of party rule, of the rule of unworthy rabble and of Jewish egalitarian tendencies... Our political faith will bring to completion the secularization process of Revelation.. The equivalence Go-man is from now on our new confession. "⁴⁹

The Fuhrer as God-man

Hitler presented himself as the man who had seen, and who would prevent, not only the destruction of German life, but the destruction of life on earth, by the "Jews." The dangers, as Hitler saw them, concerned the racial integrity of the German people, and a deliberate assault on that integrity.

In Mein Kampf Hitler outlined his mission as to expose first, and then to destroy the threat posed by a worldwide Jewish effort to foundations of the Aryan race. It is interesting to read in Hitler's writing, for example, that among their sins the Jews were responsible for bringing negroes into the Rhineland, "with the ultimate idea of bastardizing the white race which they hate and thus lowering its cultural and political level so that Jews might dominate." ⁵⁰

Germany could only become a great nation again, Hitler argued, if it saw, and repelled the Jewish dangers. In Mein Kampf, Hitler described the mission that inspired him: "Should the Jew, with the aid of his Marxist creed, triumph over other people of this world, his Crown will be the funeral wreath of mankind, and this planet will once again follow its orbit through ether, without human life on its surface, as it did millions of years ago."... "And so I believe", Hitler wrote, "that my conduct is in accordance with the will of the Almighty creator. In standing against the Jews I am defending the handiwork of the Lord." ⁵¹

Under Hitler, the savior, millions of Jews and other people died in the most brutal way during the Nazi terror of the twelve years of the Third Reich.

How did the Nazis Picture the Fuhrer, the Savior ?

In 1935 Julius Streicher, a leading Nazi, speaking to Hitler Youth said the following :

Boys and Girls, Hitler will lead the human race to be free again from the Jews who are criminals and wandered around the world for centuries and millenia marked with the sign of Cain.

Boys and Girls, for you we went to prison. For you we have always suffered. For you we had to accept mocking and insult, and because fight against the Jewish people, against that organization of criminals.⁵²

The Nazis considered the Jews as hostile, criminal, and parasitical. Hitler, the Fuhrer, the savior of mankind, and his followers, the Nazis, had a fanatical anti-Jewish obsession, ultimately materializing in death camps and gas chambers. Hitler and the Nazis saw all the imagined threats by Jews who have an intuitive cunning and political shrewdness. The Nazis exploited the cult of race and the myth of Aryan supremacy. Appeal of this myth lays in its power to recall the world of Teutonic glory with its pagan gods and heroes. Race is now all-important. Good and evil are in one's blood; they are implanted biologically and cannot be changed. Supporting the racial myth was also the *Folkish* strain that it is so strong in German history- the mysterious essence and soulfulness of Germanness which no outsider can share but which gives supreme reign to national life. One of the main elements of the *Folkish* race was the glorification of the supposedly pure, simple, honorable life style of the Middle Ages, when people worked and loved the land. By the contrast the Jews were seen as ruthless phantoms who had no contact with the land and who were spoiling the dream of communal

place by their restlessness. Never mind that the Jews were not allowed to own land in the Middle Ages.⁵³

With the rise of the Fuhrer, the savior, and the Nazis in 1933 ten concentration camps were set up in Germany, the functions of which were carefully concealed from the world, and the Nazi terror began to expand and to take on a menacing face. Terror is not new in history, but Hitler and the Nazis revolutionarized terror. Hitler and the Nazis used terror not only against opponents and not merely as deterrent, but as a permanent weapon aimed at the German people as a whole.

The concentration camps were intended not only to break the prisoners as individuals and to spread among the rest of the population, but also provided the *Gestapo* with a training ground, a way of conditioning them so they would loose all familiar human emotions and attitudes. In talks with a Nazi leader even before he became chancellor, Hitler has said : ⁵⁴ "We must be ruthless.. Only then shall we purge our people of their softness.. of their *Gemutlichkeit*.. and their delight in beer-swilling... I don't want the concentration camps transformed into denitentiaries. Terror is the most important political instrument.. It is my duty to make use of means of training the German people to cruelty, and to prepare them for war... There must be no weakness or tenderness."

Hitler and the Nazis kept their words. Terror ruled Germany and Europe for twelve years of the Nazi Third Reich. The world under Hitler and the Nazis relapsed into barbarism. The National Socialists at the same time preached the doctrine of salvation. This salvation doctrine previously propagated as unbinding ideology was transformed into a set of guidelines for concrete political action. In eight and half years from 1933 until the beginning of the " Final Solution", the characteristic features of Nazi policies toward the Jews were that anti-Jewish measures of packages of measures,

each presented as the "solution of the Jewish problem " and also viewed even by a segment of the Nazi movement itself, in this sense, posed to be mere stages; hardly had they been reached, when the continuous more " final" solutions began to emerge.⁵⁵

What was the Mentality of the Nazis,
the followers of the Fuhrer, the Savior ?

Participation in terror, sadistic measures, and the killing apparatus and mass murder of human beings required a suspension of the moral inhibitions which normally have prevented civilized people from carrying such atrocities as the Nazis perpetrated. The ground had been prepared by the process of dehumanization of the Jews through Nazi propaganda and legislation since 1933, a campaign which could exploit anti-Semitic feelings among a large section of the German population which, through largely latent, were deep-rooted. By 1939, the Jews of Germany had been stripped of their rights as citizens and their dignity as human beings. They had been pushed to the margins of German society so that their subsequent disappearance came as little surprise in a country preoccupied with racism and war preparations by the Nazis.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Before Hitler and the Nazis Germans have lived basically within the deficient but lamentable average standards of civilized behavior.⁵⁷ That this was not true during Hitler's and the Nazi regime should serve as the most powerful argument against the acquisition of inordinate power in the hands of the state or of any movement that claims to represent the " will of the

people." Once citizens allow their freedom, whether political, economic, religious, social, or intellectual, to fall victim to a state or a movement, they cannot expect to defend themselves, let alone protect Jews or other minorities who dangle on a short string in all societies." 58

It should be emphasized that for all practical purposes under the Nazis Hitler, the Fuhrer, ~~was~~ the state. By destroying power centers in the traditional bureaucracy and army, by placing Nazis in critical positions, and by granting the Nazi party and SS authority at the expense of the traditional state, Hitler created what was in effect a ~~new~~ state, in which legality was redefined according to *his* world view and predilections. In a sense, Hitler came as close as any man in history to playing God. And when the millions of Jewish and other victims pondered their own imminent deaths and wondered why must they die, since they have done nothing to deserve it, probably the simplest answer is that power was totally concentrated in one man, and that man happened to hate their "race." The Nazis who assisted Hitler in extermination craved power, not morality, and those who could have opposed him were normal men, not heroes. Once police and military are coopted, possibilities for successful resistance are few, and normal men, who by definition are not heroes, will compete for power without regard to the catastrophic effects of their immoral actions. Therein lies the tragedy of the human, and not only the German, condition. 59

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CHAPTER 3

The Final Solution

The Emergence of the Final Solution

On September 1, 1939 the first German troops crossed the Polish frontier. There were 3, 250.00 Jews in September 1939 in Poland. Under the secret terms of Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of August 23, 1939 about 1, 170.000 Jews were passed under Russian Rule. Making a liberal deduction for fugitives, nearly two millions Jews must have fallen into the hands of the Germans by September 18th.¹

In the wake of the German armored columns moved lorries and motorcycles of the *Einsatzgruppen*, the action groups of the Security Police and the SD, Heydrich's men who had originated the pogroms of "Kristallnacht" on November 9th and 10th, 1938. Pogroms now broke out about every town of Jewish inhabitation and they began on the first day of the campaign.

The planning of the "Final Solution" was synchronized with plans for the invasion of Poland and then with plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union. In all probability Hitler has made his plans before the war for the annexation of a large part of Poland to the Reich, for the expulsion of all Jews from this territory, and for the application of the "Nuremberg Laws" to the Jews wherever he might find them or put them. In this connection the report of a secret conference addressed by Heydrich on September 21, 1939, is of great significance. Heydrich carefully circulated it among higher military administration in Poland. As a first step to the *Final Solution of the Jewish*

Problem, Heydrich declared, all country-dwelling Jews must be moved into towns. In the territories, due for incorporation, the Jews must be grouped handily into a few urban communities. Except in the densely populated Jewish area east of Cracow there must be no Jewish communities of less than 500 souls and these only where the railway passes. Each is to elect a Jewish Council of not less than 24 members and the chief responsibility of the Jewish Council is to be the transportation or reception of the Jews who are to be moved. The classification and registration of the Jews to be carried out by Action Groups of the Security Police and SD.²

By a decree of October 8, 1939, the provinces that had been lost to Poland in 1918, together with some other provinces, were reincorporated into the Reich, which thus became the possessor of approximately 650,000 more Jews. Two days later, Himmler announced that 550,000 of these Jews to be deported at once to "incorporated Poland", together with Polish intellectuals and Poles suspected to be anti-German. A start would be made with the cities of Danzig and Posen. These Jews would be sent to the region between the Rivers Vistula and Bug, and eventually would increase the Jewish population of the "General Government", the name given to the "incorporated area", to about two million.³

The First Deportations

The first period of deportations lasted from October 1939 to March 1940. The Jews deported were assigned residence in existing Jewish communities between the Rivers Vistula and Bug, where many towns were ghettos already. The immediate plan was to turn out enough Jews, Poles and Chechs for the enlarged Reich to create a living space for the increasing racial Germans.⁴

According to Field Marshall Keitel it was the beginning of December 1940, that Hitler first ordered plans for the invasion of Russia, but the German General Staff were not assured of its imminence until March 1941.⁵ At this period Jewry experienced a noticeable different climate in large parts of the German-occupied territories. In February- May there was a revival of deportations into the General Government and in March the remainder of the large Polish ghettos were enclosed. In France and in the Low Countries the much postponed registration took place, while in February there was a mass deportation of Dutch Jewish hostages to the German concentration camps and in May the first round-up of foreign Jews who had received French nationalisation.⁶

There can be little doubt that these steps , which were taken on the orders of Himmler , were linked with the development of Hitler's first extermination order. The actual Fuhrer order for the execution of Jews, gypsies, racial inferiors, and Soviet political commissars was communicated to those responsible for its execution in stages.. Field Marshall Keitel recollected a conference at Hitler's headquarters in the first half of March 1941, when Himmler was given extensive plenipotentiary powers, covering all police actions which would be necessary in the occupied territories.⁷

A broad list of these "police actions" was conveyed by Keitel himself in a High Command instruction , dated, March 13, 1941 : "By order of the Fuhrer, the *Reichsfuhrer* SS Himmler has been given the special tasks, arriving from the conclusive and decisive struggle between the two opposing political systems.. Within the limits of the set tasks the *Reichstag* SS acts independently upon his own responsibility." ⁸

At a conference on March 30th, Keitel revealed to the army commanders that they would have to execute political commissars who fell into their hands , or else hand them over to the Gestapo.⁹

The Infamous Order of Goering

On July 31, 1941, when the Nazi extermination groups had been nearly six weeks in Russia, Goering wrote the following instructions to Heydrich:

"I herewith commission you to carry out all preparations with regard to the organization, the national side and financial viewpoints for a total solution of the Jewish question in those territories of Europe which are under German influence. If the competency of the central organization is touched in this connection, these organizations are to participate.

I furthermore commission you to submit to me as possible a draft showing the administration, national, and financial measures already taken for the execution of the intended final solution of the Jewish question." ¹⁰

On October 14, 1941 a decree of deporting the Jews from the German Reich was signed by Lieut. General Kurt Daluge, chief of the regular German police. ¹¹ The Nazi bureaucracy web was quite wide. Between October 16th and November 13, 1941, Jews were deported not only from Berlin but from Vienna, Prague, Cologne, and other cities of the German Reich. Even when spread out the deportations disorganized railway traffic. Later the Gestapo learned their lesson and ordered and used cattle cars for deportations. Daluge's second order, dated October 24, 1941 records that 50,000 Jews from the Greater Reich were to leave for Poland and Latvia, the movement to be completed by the end of November, 1941. ¹²

The Wannsee Conference

Deportations to Russia from Hungary and Rumania had began "spontaneously", the deportations from the Reich were systematic. It now remained to coordinate the deportations, to devise a grandiose deportation plan for the Jewry from all Axis- Europe and to obtain the necessary cooperation of the ministries of the Reich. Still acting under the brief conveyed to him by Goering of July 31, 1941, a copy of which was attached to each invitation, Heydrich scheduled a conference of ministries for December 8, 1941.¹³ The conference, probably because of the Pearl Harbor bombing and the entrance of the United States into World War II, was delayed until January 20, 1942. The conference of Heydrich took place in the office of the International Criminal Police Commission "Am Grossen Wannsee, No. 56/8." There were fourteen members in addition to Heydrich. Five of them represented the interested ministries, including the office of Governor Frank in Poland. The SS and the police were represented by Heinrich Mueller and Adolf Eichmann, of the Gestapo head office.. *(Eichmann in his trial in Jerusalem in 1961 claimed that he only followed orders and was only a small screw in a big machinery.. That much for Nazi heroism.)*¹⁴

Heydrich opened the conference with a long review of Jewish emigration since 1933 and of the present state of Jewry in Axis countries. After he described how the war with Russia made the German plan to deport Jews to Madagascar out of date Heydrich came to the gist of the matter: " In big labor gangs with separation of sexes the Jews, who are capable of work are brought to these areas (in the Eastern occupied territories) and employed in road building to which task undoubtedly a large part will fall out

through natural diminution. The remnant that is able finally to survive all this, since this is unquestionably the part with the strongest resistance, must be given treatment accordingly, because these people, representing a natural selection, are to be regarded as the germ cell of a new Jewish development, should they be allowed to go free."¹⁵

Excerpts from the Minutes of the Wannsee Conference taken by Adolf Eichmann record that "emigration now has to be replaced by evacuation of the Jews to the East as a further possible solution, in accordance with previous authorization by the Fuhrer. However these actions are to be regarded only as provisional options, even now practical experience is being gathered that is of major significance in view of the coming final solution of the Jewish question."

The Plan to Destroy European Jewry

In connection with the "Final Solution" of the European Jewish question approximately 11 million Jews may be presumed to be affected. They are described among the individual countries as follows:

A.	Germany	131,800
	Austria	43,700
	Eastern Territories	420,000
	Generalgouvernement	2,281,000
	Byalystok	400,000
	Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia	71,200
	Estonia- free of Jews	
	Latvia	3,500
	Lithuania	34,000
	Belgium	43,000
	Denmark	5,600
	France : Occupied territory	165,000

	Unoccupied territory	700,000	
	Greece	69,600	
	The Netherlands	160,800	
	Norway	1,300	
B.	Bulgaria	48,000	
	England	330,000	
	Finland	2,300	
	Ireland	4,000	
	Italy, including Sardinia	58,000	
	Albania	200	
	Croatia	40,000	
	Portugal	3,000	
	Russia- including Bessarabia	342,000	
	Sweden	8,000	
	Switzerland	18,000	
	Serbia	10,000	
	Slovakia	88,000	
	Turkey (European part)	35,500	
	Hungary	742,800	
	U.S.S.R	5,000.000	
	Ukraine	2,994,684	
	White Russia		
	excluding Bialystok	446,484	_____
TOTAL over 11,000.000 ¹⁶			

The " Final Solution " more and more became part of communications and orders. The term first appeared as Nazi terminology, used by the Germans themselves to designate their policy toward the Jews. Later on became associated with European-wide deportation, death camps and annihilation of the Jews. Most historians agree that with the Wannsee Conference, European-wide mass murder and the destruction of European Jewry emerged as the essence of the Final Solution.¹⁷

The State is Set for Mass Murders and Annihilation of Jews

The stage for mass murder and the annihilation of the Jews was set by Fuhrer in September 1939, with the attack on Poland. " War and annihilation of the Jews were interdependent." " The disorder of the war would provide Hitler with the cover for the unchecked commission of murder. He needed an arena for his operations where the restraint of common codes of morality and accepted rules of warfare would not extend " September 1939, therefore, saw the beginning of a "twofold war" : on the one hand there was the war of conquest for traditional goals such as raw materials, and empire; on the other hand there was the " war against the Jews", the decisive confrontation with the greatest enemy of the Third Reich.

The Beginning of Mass-murder

Orders to begin Europe-wide mass murder, issued in the late spring or summer of 1941, are seen flowing directly from Hitler's idea on Jews, expressed as early as 1919. On various occasions his "program of annihilation" may have been camouflaged or downplayed. But some prominent historians insist that it was always his intention : "Once Hitler adopted an ideological position, even a strategic one, he adhered to it with limpetlike fixity, fearful lest he be accused, if he changed his mind, of incertitude, or capriciousness on 'essential questions' He had long range plans to realize his ideological goals, and the destruction of the Jews was at their center. " ¹⁸

Once the fighting continued into 1941 and 1942, " the

extermination of the Jews became increasingly the most important aim of the war as such, as the fortunes of war turned against Germany, the destruction of the Jews ("The Final Solution") became National Socialism's gift to the world " in the eyes of Hitler and Nazis. Finally, in the eery atmosphere of Hitler's bunker beneath the ruins of Berlin, anti-Semitism assumed supreme importance. The extermination of the Jews (The Final Solution) now appeared to Hitler as his central historical mission." ¹⁹

Some historians claim that the Final Solution derived from the ideological fixation with Bolshevism and the east, seen as inseparable in Hitler's mind from "international Judaism". Killing on the mass scale emerged from the ideological mobilization for the onslaught on the Soviet Union that began on June 22, 1941. ²⁰

What is certain is that the nearer Hitler's plan to overthrow Russia as the last possible enemy on the continent of Europe approached maturity, the more he became obsessed with the idea- with which he had been toying as a "final solution" for a long time- of wiping out the Jews in the territories under his control. It cannot have been later than March 1941, when he openly declared his intention of having the political commissars of the Red Army shot that he issued his secret decree- which never appeared in writing though it was mentioned verbally on several occasion- that the Jews should be eliminated. ²¹ The activities of the murderous *Einsatzgruppen* increased and were followed by the killing teams of motorized SS groups in the vans of *Wehrmacht* in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. Ultimately these and related units are responsible for more than 2 million deaths, one of the greatest orgies of mass killing in the history of mankind. ²²

The War of Destruction

The genocidal character of the campaign was documented by historians, -a campaign to which Hitler referred as a *Vernichtungskrieg*, a war of destruction. The assistance of the regular army, the *Wehrmacht*, to the slaughter was also documented. No doubt that the extermination of the Jews- the Final Solution- was included in the *Barbarossa* planning process.²³

Interpretations of the Nazi Mass Murders

Functional historians believe that the Final Solution resulted from the interaction of the fanatical but distant leader, Hitler, with the chaotic structure of the Nazi regime. In the Third Reich, according to these historians, office was piled upon office, and underlings were left to find their way in a bureaucratic and administrative jungle. The only guide to success, and a compelling one, was fidelity to the Hitlerian vision.²⁴

The decision to massacre the Soviet Jews was probably taken on March, 1941 as part of the *Barbarossa* planning process. Before the end of July, Hitler, buoyed up by the spectacular successes of the Wehrmacht, the German Army, in the early part of the Russian campaign, issued his order for European-wide mass murder. At that point, the Fuhrer felt likely, everything was possible. On July 31, Goering authorized Heydrich to prepare a "total solution" of the Jewish question in the territories under the Nazis' control. Before long, work began on the first two death camps- at Belzec and Chelmno, where construction started in the autumn. On October 23, Himmler issued a factual order that passed along the Nazi chain of command; henceforth there would be no Jewish emigration permitted anywhere from

German-held territory. On November 29th, invitations went out to the Wannsee Conference, intended to coordinate deportations from across Europe. The Final Solution was about to begin. For someone as ruthless and fanatical as Hitler, a decision for the "Final Solution" can be well imagined in the apocalyptic atmosphere of *Barbarossa*, the war to settle once and for all the fate of thousand-year Reich.²⁵

Why So Many Followed Hitler in His Murderous Path?

For some historians of the Final Solution and the Holocaust, the greatest challenge has not been making sense of Hitler, but rather understanding why so many followed him in his murderous path.²⁶ Why did so many politicians and statesmen fail to get the full measure of Hitler? Why did the cream of German generals, renowned for their professionalism, permit themselves to be led to ruin by a criminal machine? Why did the Reich remain under his spell for so long in 1944-45 when by all objective standards the adventure of Nazis was finished? All these questions are related.²⁷

Functionalist historians tend to broaden the range of culpability associated with the Final Solution. To them, blame extends across the German elite, especially the military and civil service, for having performed the manifold tasks of mass murder and having done so without complaint. Some historians describe the evolution of a huge apparatus represented by the security police and the SS, operating entirely outside the framework of law and state administration. By 1942 this Nazi elite could direct various branches of the bureaucracy to carry out portions of the murderous operation, designated in euphemistic administrative language as "removals",

"evacuations", "cleansing actions", and so on. With regard to the *Wehrmacht*, several historians' demonstration of the complicity of high-ranking officers with the annihilation policy of the *Barbarossa* campaign shows conclusively that direct involvement in the Final Solution and genocide was not limited to the SS.²⁸ In some historians' view a "technocratic-hierarchical mentality" accounts for a great deal.²⁹ When zealous administrators desperately trying to anticipate the will of the Fuhrer in the Jewish question ... a chain of command requiring obedience to the Fuhrer was superfluous. Initiative from below obviated the necessity for orders from above.³⁰ According to some historians, the heavy reliance upon technology in the Final Solution- the use of gas, railways, controls, and movement of vast numbers of people- "interacted with the dehumanization of the victims"³¹ Those involved in the process could take refuge in their professional specialty, banishing all humane considerations. These perpetrators hardly thought of themselves as anything other than skilled technicians, and often seemed genuinely surprised, when years later, they were branded accomplices to mass murder and the "Final Solution."

Statistics of Death :

The Progress of Mass Murder

While planning and conducting the military war to gain *Lebensraum*- "living space" for the German people- and mastery over the whole European continent, Germany simultaneously planned and carried out a systematic program of mass murder. The Nazis regarded this mass murder as nothing less than an ideological war and its prosecution was synergized with conventional military war. The High Command of the German Armed Forces conducted the military war, while the SS, the dreaded armed police

force of the Nationalist Socialist movement conducted the ideological war of the Final Solution.³² Both wars were concurrent undertakings, strategically and operationally meshed. The success of the mass-murder offensive was made possible by the SS's parasite dependence upon Germany's military establishment and its national wartime resources, and the operation of the military war provided the cover for the mass murder.

The "Final Solution" and the mass murder represented themselves as a holy war to annihilate German's "mortal enemy". The mortal enemy - *Todfeind* was Hitler's word - consisted of the Jews, who were, according to the doctrines of National Socialism, the chief antagonists to the German "Aryans." In Nazi ideology the Jew was the primal adversary, the biological archenemy of the German people, whose physical presence, it was alleged, threatened the purity and even the very existence of the "Aryan race". No other people, nation, or "race" held that status.³³

The Nazis' Obsession with Racial Purity

Racial purity was a Nazi obsession which led to the "Final Solution." This racial purity obsession embraced every aspect of life in the German dictatorship. Racial eugenics became a matter of state policy. "Positive" racial eugenics encouraged "pure" Aryan Germans to have children, "Negative" eugenics discouraged - to the point of murder and mass murder - the procreation of life that the racists regarded as "valueless." Hitler himself had initiated a racially motivated program of murder, euphemistically called "euthanasia". Its purpose was to kill mentally ill "Aryan" adults, because their abnormalities were believed to infect the "Aryan" race and defile its national health. Within Germany itself, the

"euthanasia" program claimed about 100,000 lives. During the war, convoys of patients from mental institutions from various countries arriving at Auschwitz were set straight to the gas chambers. No records were kept of their arrival or murder, their numbers were estimated to be in the thousands.³⁴

The road was open to the "Final Solution of the Jewish question." In the hierarchy of Nazi racism, the "Aryans" were the superior race, destined to rule the world after the destruction of their racial archfoe.³⁵ The Nazis' objective in the Final Solution was the total annihilation of the Jews.

By 1941 Nazi Jewish policy had reached an impasse. Military and diplomatic success brought millions of Jews into the German sphere, while the already limited possibilities for Jewish emigration were constricted further by the outbreak of the war. Germany's self-imposed "Jewish problem" mushroomed while the traditional solution collapsed. Interim solutions of massive resettlement- in Latvia and Madagascar - likewise were not viable. The imminent invasion of Russia posed the same dilemma once again- further territorial conquest meant more Jews. At some point in the spring of 1941, Hitler decided to break the vicious circle.³⁶

The Special Tasks for the *Einsatzgruppen*

Overwhelming documentation exists to show that Germany, under Hitler's prodding, planned and prepared for a *Vernichtungskrieg*- a war of destruction, not a conventional war - in Russia. It would be a clash of ideologies and races, not of nation-states. Detailed negotiations between the Army and the SS ended in an agreement with the army promising logistical support and conceding freedom of action to small mobile SS units-

Einsatzgruppen-charged with "special tasks" behind German lines. All customs and international law concerning war and occupation were to be disregarded. Political commissars were to be executed.³⁷ German soldiers were not juridically responsible for actions against the civilian population, which was stripped of any shred of legal protection and subject to summary execution and collective reprisal. Mass starvation of millions was the anticipated result of intended economic exploitations.³⁸ Preparations for responsible care of prisoners of war was totally inadequate. Concerning the Russian Jews, weight of evidence supports the conclusion that the decision to exterminate the Russian Jews was taken before the invasion. It was part of Germany's planning, and not a policy that emerged only subsequently.³⁹

Number of *Einsatzgruppen* officers testified after the war that they were informed by mid-June of 1941, shortly before the invasion, of the extermination task before them. The *Einsatzgruppen* proceeded to murder all Jews- men, women, and children- though initial reports often attempted to portray these massacres as reprisals for partisan activities. In some documents, however, blunt language can be found: "Specific orders of the Reichsfuhrer-SS to the Second Cavalry Regiment of the Waffen-SS on August 1, 1941, stated that 'all Jews must be shot; Jewish females driven into the swamps'." ⁴⁰

Walter Stahlecker, the commander of *Einsatzgruppe A*, submitted a summary report of events through October 15, 1941, which stated that "It was expected from the start that the Jewish problem in the Ostland would not be solved solely through pogroms. On the other hand the security-police cleansing work had according to basic *orders* the goal of the most complete removal as possible of Jews. Extensive executions in the cities and flat lands were therefore carried out through special units." ⁴¹

In mid-October Stahlecker's "extensive executions" had

accounted for killing of 118,430 Jews.⁴² The last shred of ambiguity is dropped in a report of *Sturmkommandoführer* Dr. Rudolf Lange on January 1942: "The goal of the *Einsatzkommando 2* had in mind *from the beginning* was the a radical solution to the Jewish problem through execution of *all* Jews."

Hoess and Eichmann on the Final Solution

The issue of the origin of the Final Solution order is mentioned in the testimony of Rudolph Hoess, the Commander of Auschwitz, and Adolf Eichmann. Both the testimony of Hoess and Eichmann indicate that at some point in the summer of 1941 Himmler and Heydrich had given them the "green light" to prepare the Final Solution, the extermination program for Jews.

Hoess testified after the war that he was summoned to Berlin in the summer of 1941, when Himmler told him of the fuhrer's order to exterminate all European Jews. Hoess then was visited by Eichmann, who discussed the inadequacies of existing killing methods but could not give him details about the starting date of the extermination or the gassing technology to be employed. The questions were still unanswered when Hoess attended a conference of Eichmann's men in Berlin in November. That same fall Zyklon B gas was used to kill Russian prisoners in Auschwitz, and this gas was selected for the Jewish extermination that began early in 1942.⁴³

Eichmann testified that Heydrich informed him in the late summer of 1941 that the fuhrer had ordered the physical destruction of the Jews. He was then assigned to report on various preparations and killing actions in the east. First, Heydrich sent him to the already informed SS and Police Leader Odilo Globocnik in Poland, who showed him the early construction of one camp

(presumably Belsec) where it was intended to use carbon monoxide from engine exhaust gas. He then was sent to Minsk to witness *Einsatzgruppen* activities.⁴⁴ The weather had already turned cold, for he was wearing a long leather coat which was plashed with the brain of a baby held up to him by a desperate mother. Returning from the visit, Eichmann saw mass graves from which blood spouted in little geysers.⁴⁵ In late December or early January Eichmann was sent to report on the gas-van killings that had just began in the death camp of Chelmno. Though Eichmann in his trial in 1961 denied the Hoess account of a fall visit to Auschwitz, in earlier testimony he admitted to having been sent to Auschwitz "at the beginning" where he discussed gassing methods and was shown the small hut in which Zyklon B pellets had been tested on prisoners."⁴⁶

In September the German Jews were marked. In October further emigration was forbidden; the first deportations of German Jews to Poland occurred and Slovakia, Croatia, and Rumania were asked to permit inclusion of Jews of their citizenship residing in Germany in these deportations just getting underway. In November the 11th Decree of Reich Citizenship Law provided for the loss of citizenship and forfeit of property of Jews residing outside German borders. Such preparatory measures would admittedly have been necessary whether the German Jews were fated at this time merely for deportations or extermination. However, a few documents survive in support of the testimony of Eichmann and Hoess that planning activities in the fall of 1941 now focused on the ultimate goal of the extermination, not just deportations.⁴⁷

On August 28th, 1941, Eichmann wrote the Foreign Office and added to the old formulation "in view of the imminent final solution" the ominous phrase "now in preparation."⁴⁸ The timing of the change in phraseology coincides with Eichmann's own account of learning about the extermination

order in late summer. More explicit documents date from October. A number of Spanish Jews had been arrested and interned in France, which led the Spanish government to suggest the possibility of evacuating all Spanish Jews in France (some 2,000) to Spanish Morocco. Heydrich's RSHA expressed opposition to the Spanish proposal, as the Spanish government had neither the will nor the experience effectively to guard the Jews in Morocco." In addition these Jews would also be too much out of the direct reach of *the measures for a basic solution to the Jewish question to be enacted after the war.*" 49

The rejection of deportation to Morocco, combined with the mention of a basic solution to be enacted after the war which prior removal of Jews would thwart, indicated that a fundamental shift in Nazi Jewish policy had occurred. Within the SS a *judenfrei* (free of Jews) Europe was no longer being pursued through expulsion.⁵⁰

Also in October 1941 Nazi experts, an Eichmann associate and a "Jewish expert" from the Foreign Office, went to Belgrad to deal with the Jewish question in Serbia. After the fate of the adult males was settled (they were shot by army firing squads), they reported on the women, children, and elderly : "Then as soon as the technical possibility exists within a framework of a total solution of the Jewish question, the Jews will be deported by waterway to the reception camp in the east."⁵¹ Just after learning of plans for a reception camp in the east at a conference which he attended as one of Eichmann's closest associates, Rademacher received a letter from Paul Wurm, foreign editor of *Der Sturmer* which read: " Dear Party Comrade Rademacher ! On my return trip from Berlin, I met an old party comrade who works in the east on the settlement of the Jewish question. In the near future many of the Jewish vermin will be exterminated through special measures." ⁵²

Together these documents would indicate that the "Jewish experts" coming to and from Berlin in the month of October were aware of plans for "reception camps" in the east to receive Jews incapable of heavy labor and for "special measures" for extermination.⁵³

Plans for Gassing and New Camps

Discussions on both gassing and the creation of new camps for Jews of Russia took place in October by "Jewish" and technical experts in October. The "euthanasia" expert of the Reich, Victor Brack, advised the construction of gassing apparatus, presumably gas vans, on the spot because they were not in sufficient supply in the Reich.⁵⁴ Brack offered to send his chemist, Dr. Helmut Kallmeyer, to help out. Eichmann confirmed that camps were about to be set up to receive German Jews. Those capable of labor would be sent "to the east" later, but Eichmann saw no reason "why those Jews who are not fit for work should not be removed by the Brack method" in the meantime.⁵⁵

The question of how to kill the Jews were one of the most important problems for Himmler and Heydrich in 1941. Ultimately the Nazi planners solved this problem by merging three already existing programs with which they had prior experience: the concentration camp system, euthanasia gassing, and Eichmann's specialty of forced emigration and population resettlement. Auschwitz, because of its rail connections, was chosen as one site for a killing center. The exact type of gas to be used remained undetermined; in the end, the Polish camps manned by euthanasia experts retained carbon monoxide, while Auschwitz and Majdanek adopted Zyklon B.⁵⁶

Heydrich now with the approval of the Fuhrer and from the order of

Goering was ready for the "Final Solution" which he outlined at the Wannsee Conference. All Jews, Heydrich announced, would be deported to the east for labor. Most would disappear through "natural diminution" The survivors, the hardest, would be "treated accordingly " for no Jews were to survive "as germ-cell of a new Jewish reconstruction". That the participants at the Wannsee Conference were clear that the real goal of the vast deportation program was extermination, not labor, can be seen from the request of State Secretary Buhler of the General Government in Poland that the Final Solution begin in Poland because most of the Jews there were already incapable of work.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The "Final Solution" was a relapse into barbarism. The *Einsatzgruppen* had been given orders to shoot all Jews- men, women , and children- without distinction. The concentration camps and death camps created the Kingdom of death and hell on this earth. The original order for the Final Solution was given by Hitler, the fuhrer, the savior. Himmler at least in five speeches stated unmistakably that he was acting under orders from Hitler in carrying out the annihilation of the Jews.⁵⁸ The constant anti-Semitic propaganda among the German population had its effect in that almost all the German population supported the measures undertaken by the Nazis against the Jews. There was collaboration in the Nazi occupied countries and among the allies of the Third Reich to implement the "Final Solution." The free world , the Pope, the Churches were silent.

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CHAPTER 4

The Holocaust- The Kingdom of Death

What is Meant
by the Holocaust?

The Third Reich's system of concentration camps, murder squadrons, and killing centers took more than fifteen millions defenseless human lives. All these death were tragic and should be mourned. Six million or more of them were Jewish, and it will bear remembering that the Jews were the only group that Hitler targeted for extinction. Not every Nazi victim was Jewish, but the Nazi intent was to rid Europe, if not the world, of Jews. Hitler went far in fulfilling that goal. Two-thirds of Europe's Jews were killed by the end of World War II.¹ Thus, the Holocaust refers to the Nazi destruction of European Jews.

The Human Dimensions
of the Holocaust

The Third Reich lasted from 1933 to 1945. Auschwitz, which epitomizes the Holocaust, functioned as a labor and death camp from 1940 through 1944. But these momentous years were centuries in the making.²

The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 required new strategies and in the same time brought millions of Jews under German authority in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. From the Nazi viewpoint, this war was a racial struggle aimed at giving the Germanic peoples their rightful dominion over the European continent. Populations that did not

belong were either to serve Germans as slaves, or to be eliminated, or both.³

As mobile death squadron- *Einsatzgruppen* fanned out with advancing Nazi troops all along the eastern front, attention behind the lines was given to a strategy of ghettoization, which would ultimately feed the death and slave labor camps of the Reich. The Holocaust was the Final Solution, a great human tragedy and catastrophe.

The Holocaust is also the personal tragedy of 6,000,000 Jews. If one would like to tell the personal stories of the 6,000,000 Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust between 1939 and 1945 353,000 maps of locations would be needed. To draw these maps at an author's and cartographer's fastest rate of map of a day, would take more than 967 years.⁴ One and half million Jewish children were killed by the Nazis. Thousands of children were shot in the streets, or separated from their parents for the terrible journey to the death camps. Even the tiniest infants were brutally murdered, many wrenched from their mothers' arms, as both were shot, beaten to death, or gassed.⁵

How Did
the Holocaust Start ?

Soon after the task forces of the German army and the SS had begun their campaign of the extermination in the occupied areas of the Soviet

Union, Secretary of State Dr. Buhler remarked at the Wannsee Conference
"...that the General Government in Poland would welcome it if a start were to be made on the final solution of this question [extermination] in the General Government, because here transportation does not pose a real problem nor would the deployment of labor force interfere with the process of this operation. Jews should be removed from the area of the General Government as quickly as possible, because it is here

that the Jews represent a serious danger as a carrier of epidemics, and in addition their incessant black marketeering constantly upsets the country's economic structure. Of the approximately 2.5 million Jews in question, the majority are anyway unfit for work."⁶

The request of Dr. Buhler for quick action was given positive response by the Nazi authorities. A special organization was to be set for the extermination of the Jews. The actual killing was to be carried out in three death camps- Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, at the eastern border of the General Government in Poland.

The geographical location of the extermination sites served as pretext for the claim that the Jews were to be deported to ghettos in the East. Their disappearance could thus be explained in terms of their transportation to labor camps in the huge areas then occupied by the German armed forces in the Soviet Union.⁷

SS-*Brigadeführer* Otto Globocnik was entrusted with conducting Operation Reinhard - named after Reinhard Heydrich who had been assassinated on May 2, 1942.⁸ The principal task of Globocnik and his staff in *Operation Reinhard* were the overall planning of the deportations and of extermination operations ; the construction of extermination camps ; the killing of the Jews in the camps ; to secure their belongings and valuables and transfer them to the appropriate German authorities.⁹

The organization and supervision of the respective transports from the entire area of the General Government and later on also from other European countries was the task of the RSHA and its departments as well as of the supreme commandant of the SS and Police and his subordinate departments.

Preparations for *Operation Reinhard* were initiated more than six months before Himmler's order to commence the *Aktion* and at the latest

two months before to the Wannsee Conference. The first tasks were to organize the labor force and to construct the extermination centers. Upon completion of his task, Globocnik, in a letter dated October 27, 1943, to the Personnel Headquarters in Berlin, provided a detailed report, which sets out the total number of personnel involved in this operation - 434 men.¹⁰

The Construction of Death Camps

In the construction and handling the gassing installations, experienced former workers from the "Euthanasia" programs occupied leading positions in the planning, building, and administration of the Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka extermination camps.

In the late autumn of 1941, the Belzec and later the Sobibor and Treblinka extermination camps were set up, as was a training camp for "foreign personnel" - Ukrainian volunteers - in Trawniki, as well as the camp in the "old airport" of Lublin where clothes and moveable belongings of the victims were stored.¹¹

About twenty to thirty SS-men served in each camp. Most of them had formerly been engaged in the "Euthanasia" Operation. The camp commandants held the rank of SS -*Ober-* or *Hauptsturmführer*.

Units composed of the Ukrainian with some *volkdeutsche* (ethnic Germans) were assigned to assist the German camp personnel. The formation and training of such units took place in the "Trawniki-SS-Training Camp" which had been set up in the autumn of 1941. Afterwards, they were distributed among the camps in groups of 60 or 120 men with their own leaders, usually ethnic Germans. Some of the units assembled in Trawniki were also brought into action in the ghettos during the deportation of Jews,

for example, at the time of the transportation of the Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp. ¹²

The first Jews brought to camps were those from the vicinity. They were used for construction work and also performed various services for the German camp personnel. They were generally skilled workers or craftsmen such as carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, and shoemakers. As soon as the construction phase was completed, most of them were killed in trial gassings. ¹³ When the organized mass gassings began, the camp administrators needed more and more workers from among the death transports. A few, especially skilled workers, were employed in the extermination camps according to the specific directives of the German and Ukrainian camp leaders; others had to work in gas chambers, removing and incinerating the corpses; and also sorting clothes and baggage of the victims. In the initial period, in particular, they were kept alive for only a few days or weeks before being killed and replaced by Jews from newly arrived transports. In each of the camps the Jewish labor force consisted of 600 to 1,000 prisoners. At a later stage Jewish prisoners became part of the permanent staff of the camp. While members of the German or Ukrainian camp personnel were occasionally transferred to other camps, once Jewish prisoners had entered a camp they never left it again. ¹⁴

Belzec, a small town in the southeast district of Lublin, was selected as the locality for one of the extermination camps. The area specified for the camp was a railroad siding half a mile from the Belzec railroad station. In the second half of December, Christian Wirth was appointed Camp Commandant of Belzec. A report on Wirth's arrival of Belzec stated:

One Day in the winter of 1941, Wirth put together transport from Poland. I was selected along with ca. eight to ten others and transferred to Belzec in three motorcars. Upon arrival we met a

few SS men. They served as guard
which we were to fit out as gas

Wirth told us in Belzec " all for
this purpose the huts were fitted with
shower nozzles in the gas chambers. These
connected to a water pipe because they were
as camoflage for the gas chambers. The Jews
gassed were untruthfully informed that they were
and disinfected. 15

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Wirth developed his own ideas on the basis of the experience he had gained in the "Euthanasia" program. Thus, in Belzec he decided to supply the fixed gas chamber with gas produced by the internal-combustion engine of a motorcar. Wirth rejected Cyanide B which was later used in Auschwitz. This gas was produced by private firms and its extensive use in Belzec might have aroused suspicion and led to problems of supply. Wirth preferred a system based on ordinary, universally available gas and diesel fuel. 16

At the end of February 1942 the installation for the mass extermination in Belzec were completed. The first two or three transports, each consisting of four to six freight cars fully loaded with a hundred or more Jews, were used for trial killings in order to test the capacity and efficiency of the gas chambers and the technique of the extermination process. The tests lasted several days. The last group to be killed consisted of the Jewish prisoners who had taken part in building the camp. 17

Bottled carbon monoxide was used for these experiments. However, a short while later the gassings were carried out with carbon monoxide from the exhaust fumes of car engine. The engine from an armored vehicle ("250 h.p.") was installed in a shed outside the gas chamber whence the gas was piped into the gas chamber. Wirth continued to experiment in his search for the most effective method of handling the transports of the Jews, from their arrival at the camp to their extermination and the subsequent removal of the

corpses. Everything was arranged in such a way that the victims should remain unaware of their impending doom. The intention was to convey to them the impression that they had arrived at a work or transit camp from which they would be sent on to another camp.¹⁸

In addition, everything was to proceed at a top speed so that the victims would have no chance to grasp what was going on. Their reactions were to be paralyzed to prevent escape or act of resistance. The speedy process was to increase the camp's extermination capacity. In this way, several transports could be received and liquidated on one and the same day.¹⁹

In Belzec the regular security guards were the Ukrainians; they also served at the entrance gate, and on four watchtowers; they carried out several patrols. Some of them assisted in operating the gas chambers. Before arrival of a transport, the Ukrainians were deployed as guards around the ramp, at the hut for undressing and along the "tube", as far as the gas chamber. During the experimental killings they had to remove the corpses from the gas chambers and bury them. Later on, Jewish prisoners were forced to do this work.²⁰

Organized mass extermination in Belzec began with the deportation of Jews of Lublin on March 17, 1942. This date marks the actual onset of Operation Reinhard. When the train entered Belzec station, its 40-60 freight cars were rearranged into several separate transports because the reception capacity inside the camp was 20 cars at the most. Only after a set of cars had been unloaded and sent back empty was another section of the transport driven into the camp. The accompanying security guards as well as the German and Polish railroad personnel were forbidden to enter the camp.²¹ The train was brought into the camp by a specially selected and reliable team of railroad workers. According to the concept of the extermination process, the procedure was as follows:

The camp looked 'peaceful.' The victims were unable to discern either graves, ditches or gas chambers. They were led to believe that they had arrived at a transit camp. An SS-man strengthened this belief by announcing that they were to undress and go to the baths in order to wash and be disinfected. They were also told that afterwards they would receive clean clothes and be sent on to work camp.²² Separation of sexes, undressing, and even the cropping of women's hair could not but reinforce the impression that they were on the way to the baths. First the men were led into the gas chambers, before they were able to guess what was going on ; then in was the turn of the women and children.²³

The gas chambers resembled baths. A group of young and strong Jews, a few dozen, occasionally even a hundred, was usually selected during the unloading of a transport. Most of them were taken to Camp II. They were forced to drag the corpses from the gas chambers and carry them to the open ditches. Several prisoners were employed in collecting the victims' clothes and belongings and carrying them to the sorting point. Others had to remove from the train those who had died during the transport and to take those unable to walk to the ditches in Camp II. These Jews were organized into work teams with their own *Capos*. They did this work for a few days or weeks. Each day some of them were killed or replaced by new arrivals.²⁴

The Killing

Establishments

A former " euthanasia " worker in Belzec described the following scene :

After the gas chambers had been aired, a Jewish work commando, headed by a Capo, arrived and removed the corpses. Occasionally, I also had to supervise in this place. I can therefore give an exact description of what happened, because I myself witnessed and experienced it all. The ewes had been very tightly squeezed into gas chambers. For this reason the corpses

did not lie on the floor but were caught this way and that, one bent forward, another one backward, one lay on his side, another kneeled, all depending on the space. At least some of corpses were soiled with feces and urine, others partly with saliva. I could see that the lips and tips of the noses of some the corpses had taken on a bluish tint. Some had their eyes closed, with others the eyes were turned up. The corpses were pulled out of the chambers and immediately examined by a dentist. The dentist removed rings and extracted gold teeth when there were any. He threw the objects of value obtained in this matter into a cardboard box which stood there. After this procedure the corpses were thrown into the large graves there. 25

Problems also arose with the burial of the victims. When a ditch was filled with corpses, it was covered with a thin layer of soil. As a result of the heat, the decomposition process, and sometime also because of water seeped into the ditches, the bodies swelled up and the thin layer of soil burst open.

Those no longer able to walk were led directly to the ditch where they were shot. Robert Juhrs, an SS-man, who started his service in Belzec in the summer of 1942, described how such shootings were conducted :

"At the beginning of the autumn of 1942, upon arrival of a largish transport, I was assigned to the unloading site... On this transport the freight cars had been seriously overcrowded, and many Jews were unable to walk. It is possible that in the confusion a number of Jews had been pushed unto the floor and trampled on. In any case, there were Jews who could not possibly have walked via the undressing hut. As usual, Hering also turned up here for the unloading. Hering ordered me to shoot these Jews... The Jews in question were taken to the gate by Jewish work commando and from there conveyed to the ditch by other working Jews. As I recall, there were seven Jews, both men and women, who were laid inside the ditch... At this point I should like to stress that the victims concerned were those persons who had suffered most severely from the transport. I would say that they were more dead than alive. It is hard to describe the condition of these people after the long journey in the indescribably overcrowded freight cars" ...26

Sobibor, another death camp, was near the village of Sobibor. The camp was west of the railroad station of Sobibor. Near the railway station a siding led into the camp where the deportation trains were unloaded.

Construction of the camp began in March 1942 after the extermination operations in Belzec had already started. The workers employed for the construction of the camp were local people from the neighborhood. SS- *Obersturmführer* Franz Stangl was appointed as camp commandant. Before his appointment he was sent to Belzec to gain experience in operating a camp.²⁷

The first gas chambers in Sobibor were housed in a strong brick building with concrete foundations. Inside were three gas chambers; each could hold 150-200 people at a time. Each chamber had a separate entrance door leading off from a platform on the long side of the terrain. Opposite the entrance there was another door through which the corpses were removed. As in Belzec, the exhaust fumes were conducted through pipes from a nearby shed into the gas chambers.²⁸ Upon completion of the construction work, extermination tests were conducted in mid-April 1942. Wirth came to Sobibor in order to follow the experiments. He was accompanied by a chemist whose pseudonym was Dr. Blaurock.

SS- *Unterscharführer* Erich Fuchs, who served in Belzec, described the preparations for the gassing trials :

" On Wirth's instruction I travelled by truck to Lvov and collected a gassing engine there, which I transported to Sobibor... In Sobibor... [we] unloaded the engine. It was a heavy Russian gasoline engine (probably a tank or train engine) with at least 200 h.p. [V-engine, 8 cylinders, water cooled]. After some problems we started the engine... The chemist, whom I already knew from Belzec, entered the gas chamber with a measuring instrument in order to test the gas concentration. Next, an experimental gassing was carried out. I seem to recall that 30-40 women were gassed in one chamber. The Jewesses had to

undress on a covered piece of wooded ground near the gas chamber and were driven into the gas chamber by... members of the SS as well as by Ukrainian volunteers. When the women were locked into the gas chamber, I together, with Bauer operated the engine. Initially the engine idled. We both stood next to the engine and switched from free-exhaust so that the gases were conducted into the chamber. At the suggestion of the chemist, I adjusted the engine to a certain number of revs per minute so that no more gas had to be supplied. After approximately 10 minutes all the women were dead.²⁹

After this experiment, which confirmed the smooth function of the gas chambers, and the completion of some other construction work, the Sobibor extermination camp was ready to operate. It was an improved version of Belzec.³⁰ At the end of April 1942 the Sobibor extermination camp was operational. The mass extermination began during the first days of May.

Commandant Stangl introduced into his camp extermination techniques employed in Belzec. He received additional advise and guidance when Wirth visited Sobibor.

A survivor from Sobibor reported how arrivals were "greeted":

"We heard word how SS-Obersharfuhrer Michel, standing on a small table, convincingly calmed the people; he promised them that after the bath they would get back all their possessions, and said that the time had come for the Jews to become productive members of society. They would presently all be sent to Ukraine where they would be able to live and work. The speech inspired confidence and enthusiasm among the people. They applauded spontaneously and occasionally they even danced and sang.³¹

Older people, the sick and invalids, and those unable to walk were told that they would enter an infirmary for medical treatment. In reality, they were taken on carts, pulled by men or horses, into Camp II, straight to the open ditches where they were shot.³²

During the first weeks the arrivals had to undress in the open square in

Camp II. Later, a hut was erected for this purpose. There were signs pointing toward the "Cash Office" and the "Baths." At the "Cash Office" the Jews had to deposit their money and valuables. It was located in the former forester's house along the route on which naked people had to walk on their way to the "tube" and the gas chambers. The victims handed over their money and valuables through a window of this room. They had been warned that those trying to hide something would be shot. When time permitted, the Jews were given numbers as receipts for items handed over, so as to lull them into a sense of security that afterward everything would be returned to them.³³

The first phase of operation in Sobibor lasted from May until the end of July 1942. During this period 77,000 Jewish victims were exterminated, including Jews from Austria, Lublin, Bohemia and Moravia, Slovakia.³⁴

Treblinka-

The "Perfect"

Extermination Camp

Construction of Treblinka began after Belzec and Sobibor were in operation. The experience gained from the installation and extermination procedures in those two camps was taken into consideration in the planning and building of Treblinka. Thus, it became the most "perfect" extermination camp of *Operation Reinhard*.³⁵

It was erected in a sparsely populated region, about 3 miles from the village of Treblinka and the railroad station. The construction of Treblinka began at the end of May or beginning of June 1942. The gas chambers were housed in a massive brick building. The access paths, including the "tube", in Treblinka named "Streets of Heaven" by the SS-men, were modelled on those in Belzec and Sobibor; the same applied to the "reception camp" and

"accommodation camp."

During the first stage, three gas chambers were in operation. A diesel engine producing poisonous carbon monoxide, as well as a generator which supplied the whole camp with electricity, were housed in a built-on room. To the east of the gas chambers were huge ditches into which the corpses were thrown. They had been dug with an excavator from the gravel pit in Treblinka. Prisoners had to participate in this work. A narrow-gauge track had been laid from the gas chambers to transport corpses to the ditches. Prisoners had to push the trolleys.³⁶

The procedure adopted upon arrival of trains was the same as that in Sobibor; two German railroad workers, classified as being reliable, took over the transport from the Treblinka station to the extermination camp, a distance of 3 miles.³⁷ As the train approached the extermination camp, the engine blew a prolonged whistle which was the signal for the Ukrainians to man their position in the reception sector and on the roofs of the buildings. One group of SS-men and Ukrainians took positions on the station platform. As soon as the train was moving along the tracks inside the camp, the gates behind it were closed. The deportees were taken out of the freight cars and conducted through a gate to a fenced-in square inside the camp. At the gate they were separated: men to the right, women and children to the left. A large placard announced in Polish and German:

Attention Warsaw Jews!

You are in a transit camp from which the transport will continue to labor camps.

To prevent epidemics, clothing as well as pieces of baggage are to be handed over for disinfection.

Gold, money, foreign currency, and jewelry are to be deposited at the "Cash Office" against a receipt. They will be returned later on presentation of receipt.

For physical cleanliness, all arrivals must have bath before travelling on.³⁸

During the first phase, from the beginning to the middle of August, 5,000-7,000 Jews arrived every day at Treblinka. Then the space of the transports increased; there were days on which 10,000-12,000 deportees reached the camp, together with thousands who were already dead and others who were utterly exhausted.³⁹

To Enter
the Kingdom of Death

A description of arrival is described the following way :

When we arrived in Treblinka and the Germans opened the freight cars we beheld a horrible sight. The car was full of corpses. The bodies were partly decomposed by chlorine. The stench in the cars made those still alive choke. The Germans ordered everyone to get out; those still able to do so were half dead. Waiting SS and Ukrainians beat us and shot at us. On the way to the gas chambers Germans with dogs stood along the fence on both sides. The dogs had been trained to attack people; they bit the men's genitals and women's breasts, ripping off pieces of flesh. The Germans hit people with whips and iron bars to spur them on so they pressed forward into the "showers" as quickly as possible. The scream of the women could be heard far away, even in other parts of the camp... To escape the blows, the victims ran to the gas chambers as quickly as they could... At the entrance to the gas chambers stood two Ukrainians, Ivan Demianiuk [now in prison in Israel- author's note] and Nikolai, one of them armed with an iron bar, the other with a sword.

They drove the people inside with blows... As soon as the gas chambers were full, the Ukrainians closed the doors and started the engine. Some 20-25 minutes later an SS-man or an Ukrainian looked through a window in the door. When they had ascertained that everyone had been asphyxiated, the Jewish prisoners had to open the doors and remove the corpses. Since the chambers were overcrowded and the victims held on to one another, they all stood upright and were like one single block of flesh." 40

Breakdowns and interruptions occurred in the operation of the gas chambers. During the initial phase the personnel did not know how long it would take to asphyxiate the victims. On occasions the doors were opened too early and the victims were still alive, so that the doors had to be closed again. The engines which produced the gas occasionally failed. If such mishaps occurred when the victims were already inside the gas chambers, they were left standing there until the engines had been repaired. 41

Some 268,000 Jews met their deaths in the first extermination wave in Treblinka, which lasted five weeks—from July 23 to August 28.

The first period of Operation in Belzec and Sobibor lasted about three months, in Treblinka five weeks... After this initial phase, those holding key positions in Operation Reinhard decided to introduce "improvements" into the camps so as to increase their extermination capacity. This decision was brought on by Himmler's order of July 19, 1942, that all Jews in the General Government, were to be eradicated by the end of the year. 42

A Nazi Problem:

How to Increase the Capacity
of the Gas Chambers?

The main problem was finding a way to speed up the extermination procedure, i.e. increasing the absorption capacity of the gas chambers. Belzec was the first camp in which large gas chambers were built. The new gas chambers were able to take in 1,5000 persons at one and the same time, i.e., a transport of about 15 freight cars.⁴³

In Treblinka the new gas chambers were able to accomodate 4,000 persons at a time. A new building was built which comprised 10 gas chambers. A low ceiling reduced the volume of the room and hence also the amount of gas needed for killing the victims. In addition, it shortened the asphyxiation time. The new building was rectangular. A dark curtain from a synagogue hung at the entrance to the passage. It had written on it in Hebrew: "This is the gate, through which the righteous may enter."⁴⁴ The pediment above the entrance door bore a Shield of David. Five steps led up to it, both sides of which were decorated with pot plants. The new building, with its idyllic flight of stairs, plants and curtain, stood at the end of the "tube," ran up the stairs to the entrance and into the passage. The engine producing the gas was located at the end of the building.⁴⁵

In order to speed the construction, a group of Jewish masons was brought from Warsaw. A total of 40 Jewish prisoners worked on the gas chambers.

In Sobibor the new building had six gas chambers. An important technical change in Sobibor was a narrow-gauge mine-track which ran from the railroad platform to the mass graves. It was to replace the trolleys pulled by prisoners or horses, which had transported the dead, the sick, and invalids from the train to the ditches.

Another Nazi Problem :
How to Remove the Traces?

Hundreds of thousand of corpses of people murdered in the death camps during the spring and summer in 1942 lay in huge mass graves. In the autumn of 1942 the camp commandants of Sobibor and Belzec decided to incinerate the corpses ; in Treblinka, start on this was made only in 1943. To remove all signs of crimes was not new. In the spring of 1942 Himmler had decided that in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, the corpses of the murdered Jews and Russian prisoners of war were to be exhumed from the graves and incinerated without leaving any traces. The same was to be done with the past and future victims of the extermination camps.⁴⁶

A description of incineration of corpses by an SS- *Scharführer* follows :

Then began the general exhumation and burning of corpses; it may have taken from November 1942 to March 1943. The incinerations went on day and night, without interruption, initially at one, then at two sites. At one of the sites it was possible to incinerate about 2,000 corpses within 24 hours. Approximately four weeks after the start of the incineration operation, the second site was set up. Thus, on the average, a total of 300,000 corpses were burnt at one site within about five months, and 240,000 at the second site about 4 months. These are obviously estimates of averages. It would be probably be correct to put the sum total at 500,000 corpses.

The incineration of disinterred corpses was such a horrific procedure from human, aesthetic, and oleofactory aspects that it is impossible for people who are now used to living like ordinary citizens to be to imagine this horror.⁴⁷

A description by an SS- *Oberscharführer*, who was responsible for the extermination sector in Treblinka, records that " The incineration was carried out by placing railroad rails on blocks of concrete, The corpses were

then piled up on these rails. Brushwood was placed under the rails. The wood was drenched with gasoline. Not only the newly obtained corpses were burnt in this way, but also those exhumed from the ditches."⁴⁸

The burning of corpses proceeded day and night. When the fire had died down, whole skeletons or single bones remained behind on the grating. Mounds of ash had accumulated underneath it. A different prisoner commando, the "Ashes Gang," had to sweep up the ashes, place the remaining bones on thin metal sheets, pound them with round wooden dowels, and then shake them through a narrow-mesh metal sieve; whatever remained in the sieve was crushed once more. Bones not burnt and which could not easily be split were again thrown into the fire.⁴⁹

The camp leadership in Treblinka was faced with the problem of how to get rid of the huge heaps of ash and bone fragments. Experiments at mixing the ashes with dust and sand, in an effort to conceal them, proved unsuccessful. Finally it was decided to pour the ash and bone fragments back into the empty ditches and to cover them with a thick layer of sand and garbage. Alternate layers of ash and sand poured into the ditches. There was also a top layer of earth.⁵⁰

According to Polish official publications based on the data of the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland and the trial of Nazi war criminals, the total number of victims in Treblinka was 850,000, in Belzec-600,000 and in Sobibor-250,000.⁵¹

The Atrocities of the *Einsatzgruppen*

In addition to the death camps, to implement the Final Solution a special contingent in the SS, the *Einsatzgruppen*, was organized. These

exterminators were followed by the lighting advance of the German army, the Wehrmacht. The *Einsatzgruppen* acquitted themselves of their task with dispatch, using non-Germans, even Jews, for rounding up and disposing of their quarry. Their methods were simple- machine gunning and mass burial.⁵²

One of the documents discovered at the close of the war over the name of a certain Hermann Graebe gives a description of a scene on October 5, 1942:

We went directly to the trenches without trouble. As we approached the embankment, I heard a rapid succession of machine gun fire. The people who had left the trucks- men, women, and children-were forced to undress under the surveillance of an SS soldier, whip in hand. They were obliged to deposit their effects at certain places : shoes, clothing and linens separately. I saw a heap of shoes, about 800 or 1,000 pairs and a large pile of underwear and clothing. Without weeping or murmuring , these people undressed and stood about in family groups, embracing one another and making the last farewells waiting for the signal from the SS soldier who stood at the edge of the trench, whip still in hand. For a quarter an hour that I stayed there I did not hear a single complaint or plea of mercy. I watched a family of about eight members, a man and his wife of about 50 years of age, encircled by their children of about one, eight and ten years, and two older daughters of about twenty and twenty four. An old white-haired lady held the baby in her arms, rocking it and singing it a song. The parents watched the group with tears in their eyes.... I went around the embankment and found myself in front of a horrendous common grave. Tightly packed bodies were piled one upon other in such a way that only the heads were visible. Almost all had a head wound with blood flowing onto their shoulders. A few were still moving. Others lifted their hands and turned their heads to show that they were still alive. The trench was about two-thirds filled. I put the number of bodies at about a thousand. I looked for the man who performed the execution. He was an SS soldier. He sat, legs dangling, on the arrow edge of the trench. A machine gun was placed on his knees and he was smoking a cigarette. The

people, completely naked, descended a few steps dug in the clay wall of the trench and took the place indicated by the SS man. Lined up in front of the dead and wounded, they spoke to him quietly. Then I heard a series of shots.. On the way back, as I circled the embankment I saw a new truck filled with people that had just arrived... This time it contained only sick and invalids. Some women, already naked, were in the process of undressing old women, whose body was fleshless and whose legs were of a frightful thinness. She seemed to be paralyzed and was held by two persons. The naked ones led her to the embankments...⁵³

The scene was multiplied month after month. Then in 1942 "gas trucks" arrived from Germany. Asphyxiation- Hitler's suggestion- was more efficient and less bloody. By 1943 the task was fairly complete, and the RSHA turned to the problem of destroying the traces of their accomplishments by fire and dynamite. Eichmann placed the number of dead in the Soviet Union at 2,000,000 : some statisticians place the number "*only*" [author's emphasis] at 1,500,000."⁵⁴

The *Wehrmacht's* Cooperation with the *Einsatzgruppen*

How did the *Wehrmacht*, the German army, react to the atrocities? Their orders were not to interfere with the work of the *Einsatzgruppen*. Some generals cooperated with the *Einsatzgruppen* actively, other maintained a passive attitude, only a few showed disapproval. The military, too, according to Father Edward H. Flannery, learned their lessons well about the "race of monkeys" in human form.⁵⁵

The Liquidation of Polish Jews

The liquidation of Polish Jews, as analysed before, comprised act two of the hideous drama. They had been crowded into the large city ghettos- 500,000 into the Warsaw ghetto, which ordinarily held 145,000. The first extermination efforts were informal. Jews were given 800 calories a day and trading was forbidden, so that long before as many as thirty percent of the ghetto populations died of starvation or disease. But this death was not fast enough for the Nazi schedule. Death camps were organized, principally at Chelsea, Maidanek, Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, and the transfer from the ghettos to the camps began at a rate of as many as 10,000 a day.

Liquidation of European Jews

Adolf Eichmann took personal charge of the extermination program in Europe west of Poland. Since the chances that the extermination program might be discovered were greater in the West, increased caution was necessary. Native German Jews were sent to the camp of Theresienstadt for slave labor where the conditions at the beginning were a trifle more human than elsewhere, but at the end they were not spared. The rest, for the greater part, were transported to Maidanek, Belzec, and Treblinka, camps considered a safe distance from German eyes. By the end of 1942 the Greater Reich was "cleansed of Jews". Those of the occupied countries were usually sent to Auschwitz, an enormous and well disguised camp in southern Poland in Rudolph Hoess' charge, where it was possible to cremate 10,000 corpses a day. 56

Survivors' accounts of life in the camps say that only prisoners who had lived through it could know what it was really like. Some speak of it as a different universe. But there is a danger of mystification ; yes Auschwitz was hell, and the SS were devils but at the same time Auschwitz was modern institution created by the German state and the SS was an official organization of the Germany.

During the Nazi period and particularly in the last years, numerous and varied camps dotted Europe's landscape like poisonous mushrooms : Dachau, Buchenwald, Dora, Mauthausen, Sobibor, Belzec, Treblinka. They all have their unique history, but it is Auschwitz that is identified with the " Holocaust. " ⁵⁷

The "Jewel" of the Death Camps : Auschwitz

Trains would bring prisoners to Auschwitz from all over Europe. A selection at the ramp would separate those marked for immediate killing from those who were to be used as slave labor. At the same time constant selections in the camp destroyed those who could not maintain their health and physical strength. ⁵⁸

The rationalization and industrialization of mass killing were here developed further than anywhere else. Originally the killing apparatus consisted of several relatively small gas chambers. With the support of a number of German business firms, new installations were begun in the summer of 1942 and completed in 1943 with larger capacities both for killing, and , what had been a major bottleneck at other camps, for the destruction of bodies. In a note the following description was found: "... leaders of the Third Reich and industrialists had the opportunity to view the

entire operation on the formal inauguration day, a bright March morning in 1943... The program consisted of the gassing and burning of 8,000 Cracow Jews. The guests... were extremely satisfied with the results and the special peephole fitted into the door of the gas chambers was in constant use. They were lavish in their praise of this newly erected installation."⁵⁹

The camp grew rapidly, taking in more and more prisoners. Satellite camps, which used prisoners for labor, were built. As experience in running the death technology increased, output also increased. The exact number of killed cannot be accurately determined, but estimates range between two to four million. Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz, commented on how easy mass killings were: "One did not even need guards to drive them into the gas chambers; they simply went in, because they assumed that they would shower there, and instead of water we turned on poison gas. It went very quickly. [*"Das Ganze ging schnell."*]"⁶⁰

In Auschwitz killing became a routinized activity. It was a logical plan, a carefully orchestrated program of mass murder. It required cooperation between killers, scientists and bureaucrats. As in the slaughterhouse the attempt was made to use all the by-product. The property of those killed was collected; the extracted gold teeth supported the currency; ashes were used as fertilizer; hair was cut and collected for further industrial use.⁶¹

Killing was only one of the activities at Auschwitz. As the material situation for Germany worsened, German industry, most notably I.G. Farben, took advantage of the availability of cheap labor to build factories for production of synthetics. Prisoners were literally worked to death. Medical experiments using prisoners as subjects were carried on by some SS doctors. Joseph Mengele, perhaps the best known physician of Auschwitz, was interested in Noma, a disease that attacked the cheeks of children. He was also interested in research on twins, which frequently involved killing both

at the same time to compare the organs. He injected children in the eyes to change their eye color.⁶² Dr. Carl Clauberg attempted to find a cheap method of sterilizing women without an operation. Himmler had an interest in matters of this sort, which would permit exploiting the labor of conquered people while at the same time ensuring their destruction. A block was made available for Dr. Clauberg, in which women- called "rabbits" (*Kaninchen*) in camp parlance- were injected with experimental substance to test their efficacy.⁶³

The Holocaust in Occupied Europe

Between 1939 and 1945 Germany had established, either through conquest or through an alliance system, control of most of the continent of Europe. The German sphere of influence included major portions of the Soviet Union, Austria, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belgium, Holland, France, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Italy, Norway, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. German success in destroying Jews varied among countries. Ninety percent of Poland's Jews were annihilated, 75 percent of Holland's, 20 percent of Italy's, while none of Denmark Jews were killed. (Fifty-nine died in Theresienstadt of natural causes.) No Jews from Finland were deported.⁶⁴

In countries where the SS was in complete control it could round up Jews for deportation even amid a population sympathetic to the Jews. But in many countries elements of the population approved the German actions against Jews, and in some supported it. It is beyond dispute that in Poland many approved the extermination of the Jews. The Germans had no difficulty to recruit auxiliaries from the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, and other

countries to serve in concentration and death camps, and local police forces were available in many countries to help the Germans.

The Nazis' "Last Hurrah" :

The Tragedy of

Hungarian Jewry in 1944

Almost at the end of the Holocaust on 10 March 1944 Adolpf Eichmann and his principals subordinates met at the Mauthausen concentration camp in order to work out a deportation programme for the 750,000 Jews of Hungary. On March 19th the German troops began to move into Hungary. The Germans took immediately action, arresting two hundred Jewish doctors and lawyers, their names chosen at random from the Budapest telephone book. All were deported to Mauthausen. The Gestapo then moved into hundreds of Hungarian towns and villages ; prepared a list of all Jewish wealth in each town; took the leaders of the local community into custody; and then threatened to shoot the leaders if money and valuables were not forthcoming. Later, the Germans moved all Jews out of their homes and into especially designated ghetto areas in each town. The " ghettos" were often abandoned barracks, a deserted brickworks, or a timber yard. The first deportations from Hungary to Auschwitz took place on April 29, 1944. On April 30 a second deportation left Hungary for Auschwitz. The last deportation from the provinces were on May 30th. Elie Wiesel and the author were among them.⁶⁵

A specially built railway spur brought the trains to the very gates of the gas chambers. "When we arrived in Birkenau", one eye-witness wrote four months later , "such a smell of burning flesh wafted toward us that in the groups arriving at night, who not only smelt the stench but saw the flames

rising from crematoria, many committed suicide at once."⁶⁶ A Jewess from Hungary, later recalled the moment of arrival at Birkenau as " Corpses were thrown all over the road ; bodies were hanging from the barbed-wire fence; the sound of shots rang in the air continuously. Blazing flames shot into the sky; a giant cloud ascended above them. Starving, emaciated human skeletons stumbled toward us, uttering incoherent sounds. They fell down right in front of our eyes, and lay their gasping out their last breath."⁶⁷

With each train from Hungary selections were made, and some men and women from each train were sent to the barracks. The author was sent to barracks, his mother to the gas chamber. *Within a few days, twelve thousand Jews were being gassed and cremated every twenty-four hours.* [author's Italics].

One of the survivors of the Sonderkommando at Birkenau, noted of these Hungarian transports:

If the number of persons to be gassed was not sufficiently large, they would be shot and burned in pits. It was a rule to use the gas-chamber for groups of more than two hundred persons, as it was not worth-while to put the gas chamber in action for a smaller number of people. It happened that some prisoners offered resistance when about to be shot at the pit or that children would cry and then the SS Quartermaster Sergeant would throw them alive into the flames of the pits...

I was eye-witness of the following incidents: The Quartermaster Sergeant told a naked woman to sit down on the corpses near the pit, and while he himself shot prisoners and threw their bodies into the flaming pit he ordered her to jump about and sing. She did so, in the hope, of course, of thus saving her life, perhaps. When he had shot them all, he also shot this woman and her corpse was cremated."⁶⁸

Two of the gas-chambers, numbered II and III, were at the end of the railway spur. But two more, IV and V, were some way across the camp,

nearly three thousand yards, at the edge of Birkenau woods. To these two more distant gas-chambers, the Jews were marched on foot. Those who were sick, as well as old men and women who were too weak to walk, and sometimes children, were taken from the railway ramp to these distant gas-chambers by truck. A survivor recalled later what happened, when those brought by truck reached the gas-chamber: "they were dumped into the yard just as is done when refuse is dumped from lorries into pits, expressly prepared for that purpose... When it happened that after gassing we found a still moving body among the corpses, we did not want to throw a still living person into the fire and then one of the SS men finished him off with a revolver shot."⁶⁹

Killing , Killing, Killing

Until the End

On 6 June 1944 the Allied Forces landed in Normandy. The long awaited second front was in being. In the east, the Red Army was poised to renew its offense. The same day, on the Greek Island of Corfu, the Germans rounded up 1,795 Jews. All were deported to Auschwitz, where 1,500 were gassed on arrival.⁷⁰ With every day of the Allied struggle on the Normandy beaches and across the fields of northern France, Jews were being gassed in Auschwitz, or hunted down, and shot through German-occupied Europe.⁷¹

On July 18, 1944 it was the turn of the 4,500 Jews of Rhodes and Kos to be caught in the maelstrom. Only 163 survived the war. On July 19, despite the halt of the deportations from Hungary, twelve hundred Jews were sent to Birkenau.⁷²

Even as the Red Army moved westward, driving the Germans from the Polish soil, the deportations to Auschwitz continued. On July 24th Soviet

forces entered Majdanek. War correspondents from all the Allied Armies gazed in horror at gas-chambers, crematoria, and the charred remains of human beings. Photographs of these remains were published throughout the Allied world.⁷³

At Birkenau, following the gassing of four hundred thousand Hungarian Jews in the summer of 1944, there was substantial reduction of trains reaching the camp, so much that during September the SS decided to reduce the number of Sonderkommando prisoners. On September 24, two hundred men of the Sonderkommando were forced into freight cars at the ramp of Birkenau under the pretense of being sent to work at some distant camp. They were in fact taken to the Auschwitz main camp, where they were gassed. That night their bodies were brought back to Birkenau, and burned.⁷⁴

In one of the cruelest programs of Auschwitz a thousand boys were led to the gas chambers upon the order of Mengele on the holiest Jewish Holy Day, the Day of Atonement.⁷⁵ The Day of Atonement passed, and the gassing at Auschwitz continued. From the transports from Theresienstadt most of the people were gassed. In some transports all women were sent to the gas-chambers. In others, all who were sick, all women with children, and everyone over forty-five, were gassed.⁷⁶

In October, the Hungarian pro-Nazi government agreed, at Eichmann's request, to allow twenty-five thousand Jews to be sent to Germany for forced labor.⁷⁷

The last deportations from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, "Transport Ev", took place on October 28 with 2038 Jews packed into the cattle trucks. The same day, a train from Bolzano in northern Italy reached Auschwitz. From it, 105 women and 59 men were sent to the barracks, and 137 men were gassed. From the 2038 Jews from Theresienstadt 1,689 were gassed.⁷⁸

There now began the systematic destruction of evidence. Ten days before the gassing of October 30, two small taxis and a prison car brought a mass of documents to Crematorium III. These were files about individual prisoners, death certificates, and charge sheets. All were burned. The destruction of evidence went parallel with last weeks of human killings.⁷⁹

The human evidence of Auschwitz's horrendous barracks was also being removed. Throughout October 1944 thousands of Jews were marched away from Auschwitz to other camps, and to factories, in central and western Germany. These marches became a new form of torture, in which tens of thousands were to perish.⁸⁰

In Auschwitz, the gassing had ended at the end of October 1944. For two months, tens of thousands of Jews had remained in the barracks. Hunger and exposure took their toll. On January 6, 1945, Anne Frank's mother Edith died in the camp. Anne Frank, deported from Birkenau to Bergen Belsen the previous October with her elder sister, Margot, died there of typhus at about the same time a few days after the death of Margot.⁸¹

On January 17, 1945, as Soviet forces entered Budapest and Warsaw, Auschwitz lay finally exposed to imminent assault. A count was made of the number of Jews and other prisoners. At Birkenau, there remained 15,058, most Jews ; at Auschwitz 16,626 mostly Poles ; at Monowitz 10,233 Jews, Poles, and forced labourers including British prisoners-of-war; and in the factories of the Auschwitz region another 16,000 Jews and non-Jews. On January 18 the order was given; immediate evacuation, on foot, often to a nearby railway junction from which could be taken to a hundred of different camps and sub-camps in western Germany, but sometimes by foot for hundreds of miles.⁸² Thousand who were too weak to march away were shot in the camps themselves on the eve of the evacuation.

On January 27, 1945 the Red Army entered Auschwitz. Among those

still alive in the camp hospital was Otto Frank, father of Anne Frank. Otto Frank made his way to Odessa across the Ukraine, then by boat to Marseilles, and then to Amsterdam, where he found his daughter diary.⁸³

From the first days of 1945 it became clear that Russian and Western Allies would continue to advance until they met somewhere in the middle of Germany. But Hitler still hoped that the German army would be able to hold out in one of the mountainous areas that remained under his control, and from there to continue the war. A new policy now drove the SS to prolong the agony of the death marches: the desire to preserve as long as possible a mass of slave labour for all the needs which confronted the disintegrating German army; repairing roads and railway tracks, building up new railway embankments, repairing bridges, excavating underground bunkers, from which the battle could still be directed, preparing tank traps for the advancing Allies, and helping the massive work involved in preparing mountain fortresses deep under ground. However for the Jews the death marches and the death trains continued, despite the increasing chaos on roads and railways following the collapse of both western and eastern fronts.⁸⁴

On April 10, Adolf Eichmann made his last visit to Theresienstadt. There, he was heard to say: "I shall gladly jump into the pit, knowing that in the same pit there are five million enemies of the state."⁸⁵

By May 8th all the camps both in east and the west were liberated.

The Tragic Toll of the Holocaust

Country(Prewar borders)	Number of Jews September 1939	Number of Jews Lost in the Holocaust
Poland	3,250.000	2,850.000
U.S.S.R. (Occupied Area)	2,100.000	1,500.000
Romania	850.000	425.000

Hungary	400.000	200.000
Czechoslovakia	315.000	240.00
France	300.000	90.000
Germany	193.000	110.000
Austria	90.000	45.000
Lithuania	150.000	130.000
Holland	150.000	105.000
Latvia	95.000	80.000
Belgium	90.000	40.000
Yugoslavia	75.000	55.000
Greece	75.000	60.000
Italy	57.000	15.000
Bulgaria	50.000	7,000
Denmark, Estonia, Norway,		
Luxembourg, Danzig	<u>15,000</u>	<u>5,000</u>
Total	8,255.000	5,957.000

May they always be remembered.

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JEWS MURDERED BETWEEN 1 SEPTEMBER 1939 AND 8 MAY 1945: AN ESTIMATE



CHAPTER 5

Life and Death in the Ghettos, Concentration and Death Camps

With the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, some two million Jews came under German rule. Two years later, when the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, some three million more Jews came under German dominion—the rest of the Jews of prewar Poland, all the Jews of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Soviet White Russia, and most of the Jews in the Ukraine, the Crimea and Russia proper. These five million Jews lived in metropolitan industrial centers, in ancient historic cities and in provincial capitals. They lived in hundreds of county seats and market towns and were dispersed in thousands of villages. In prewar Poland, Jews had resided in over 16,000 localities.¹

The East European Jewish settlement was massive and concentrated. The 350,000 Jews of prewar Warsaw, Poland, equaled the whole Jewish population of prewar France. The 200,000 Jews of Lodz, an industrial city, matched the number of Jews in all Czechoslovakia. Kiev's Jewish population of 150,000 was nearly the size of Holland's Jewish population. The 100,000 Jews of Lemberg exceeded in number of combined Jewish population of Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Norway. Cracow's 56,000 Jews equaled all Italy's Jews; Vilna's prewar Jewish population of 55,000 was greater than the Jewish population of Bulgaria. The very numbers and density of East European Jewry determined their fate. Under the Germans it would hasten their doom.²

All over Poland, the first response among Jews to the German invasion was flight. Thousands upon thousands of Jews set out on foot, on carts, in wagons, seeking refuge. Jews in small towns fled to the big cities;

Jews in the metropolises fled to towns and villages. As soon as the Germans occupied Poland, their *Einsatzgruppen* began to direct a flow of human traffic that soon radically altered the age-old patterns of Jewish settlements in Poland. The Jews were driven from hundreds of localities. They were expelled from thousands of small towns and villages throughout Poland and sent to nearby big cities. In hundreds of small towns ancient Jewish communities were uprooted. Within a few months of the German occupation thousands of Jewish settlements were erased from the map of Poland, their inhabitants ejected without notice, forbidden to take bare necessities, condemned to exposure, hunger, and homelessness.³ Some 330,000 Jews— one-tenth of Jews of Poland— became homeless refugees, beggars of bread and shelter, candidates for disease and death.

The German Terror

The very moment the Germans entered a town or city, they turned the Jews into outcasts of society. They confiscated Jewish businesses and industry and sealed off Jewish retail stores for the disposal of either the military occupation or the SS. Sometimes Jewish shops were ordered to be opened only so that they could be plundered and robbed. In large manufacturing centers military trucks carried off the goods of Jewish factories and stores. In small communities Jews were ordered to bring in all their gold and jewelry under threat of death. Hostages were taken to enforce the extortion of large sums of money from the Jewish community, but were seldom released even after the contribution had been delivered.⁴

Terror enveloped the Jews. The Germans reenacted the Kristallnacht in every town and city they invaded and occupied.⁵ All over Poland

synagogues went up in flames. Those spared by fire were desecrated, turned into stables, garages, and public latrines. Everywhere the Germans organized pogroms, rounding up non-Jewish population to witness and learn how to mock, abuse, injure, and murder Jews. Unbridled killing and senseless violence became daily commonplace for the Jews; the fear of sudden death became normal and habitual.

German terror in The General Government of Poland in 1939 was wild and wanton. In the territory vested from Russia in 1941, terror became systematic and massive. Within days of the German invasion, thousands upon thousands of Jews disappeared in raids carried out by Lithuanians, White Russians and Ukrainians under German orders. Everywhere the terror was aggravated by the sadism of the SS. The refinements of cruelty were reserved especially for pious Jews and rabbis, whose traditional Jewish garb-hat and long coat- and whose beard and sidelocks identified them as quintessentially Jewish. (In Germany the Nazis had often failed to distinguish Jews from "Aryans" by "racial" features. During the High Holy Days of 1932, a Nazi gang, bent on anti-Jewish violence, mistakenly beat up "Aryans.")⁶ The Germans deliberately chose observant Jews to force them to desecrate and destroy the sacred articles of Judaism, even to set fire to synagogues. In some places the Germans piled the Torah scrolls in the marketplace, compelling the Jews to set fire to the pile, dance around it, singing, " We rejoice that the shit is burning."⁷ The most popular German game, played in countless variations, was "beards." In its simplest versions Germans seized bearded Jews and beat them. A more sophisticated entertainment involved plucking beards, hair by hair or in clumps. Sometimes Germans hacked off Jewish beards with bayonets, often along with parts of cheeks, chins, faces.⁸

As the Germans consolidated their positions in Poland, they set up

labor camps outside the big cities, some of which- Treblinka and Majdanek- eventually became annihilation camps. In 1940, within a year after the invasion of Poland the SS was operating 125 forced labor camps just for Jews, where terror, violence, and sadism ruled.

On November 23, 1939. Hans Frank, the Governor General of occupied Poland, issued an ordinance prescribing arm bands for all Jewish men and women over ten years of age- a white band with the Star of David, to be worn on the right sleeve of both inner and outer clothing. Jews were being concentrated and identified, so that none would escape the ever-tightening meshes of German control. On November 28, 1939, Frank issued a decree ordering the formation in each city of a *Judenrat* (Jewish Council), whose membership roster was to be submitted to German officials for approval. In many places the decree came after the fact, for Heydrich's instruction to the chief of the *Einsatzgruppen* on September 21, 1939 concerning the concentration of Jews in cities and setting up Jewish Councils, had already been put in force. Frank's order specified that the Judenrat was obliged to accept German orders and was answerable for their conscientious execution. Furthermore, it stipulated that all Jews had to obey the directives that the Jewish Councils issued to implement German orders.⁹

The Establishment of Ghettos

The next step was *de facto* ghettoization, soon to become *de jure*. One of the first ventures to establish a twentieth-century ghetto occurred in Warsaw, where a Judenrat had already been set up on Gestapo instruction. In October 1939 barbed wire had enclosed the main streets of dense Jewish population. In December 1939 the Judenrat was compelled to set up a large

wooden signs, reading "Danger ; Epidemic Zone", at thirty-four street corners leading into the heart of the Jewish quarter.¹⁰ In the spring of 1940 these entries were walled up, restricting and hindering movement between the Jewish quarter and the rest of Warsaw. The world of the Warsaw Jews was becoming a prison.¹¹ On May 1, 1940, the Lodz ghetto, with over 160,000 Jews, was sealed off. In Warsaw the ghetto walls began to be constructed in the summer of 1940, and by November 1940, nearly half a million Jews were enclosed and locked within its walls and guarded gates. Warsaw and Lodz, with the largest Jewish populations, were most tightly, almost hermetically, sealed. Some ghettos had stone or brick walls; others had wooden fences with barbed wire entanglements. The Cracow ghetto was enclosed within a wall in the form of Jewish tombstones, symbols of a terrifyingly literal character.¹²

The ghetto was an evil decree. Like sinners and criminals, a chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto, noted on November 13, 1940, "we are segregated and separated from the world and the fullness thereof, driven out of the society of the human race."¹³ Moving into the ghetto was everywhere a day of lamentation, a nightmare experience. "Endless processions of weary men and women, babies in their arms, children at their sides, with bags, sacks, bedrolls on their backs and around their necks, the miserable remnants of their belonging loaded on carts, wheelbarrows, or makeshift conveyances, leftover of their past life, artifacts of a vanishing civilization, pushing, shoving, screaming, groaning, shuffled into the ghettos."¹⁴

The only institution comparable to the Nazi ghetto was the Nazi concentration camp, that "concentrationary universe", where "death lived among the concentrationees at every hour of their existence."¹⁵ Death bestrode the Nazi ghetto and was its true master, exercising its dominion

through hunger, forced labor, and disease.

The Misery of the Ghetto

The deprivation of freedom was universally felt. A thirteen year old boy recorded in his diary the events of September 6, 1941, moving day into the Vilno ghetto: "I feel that I have been robbed, my freedom is being robbed from me, and my home, and the familiar streets I love so much."¹⁶ The ghettos were located in the oldest, most run-down parts of town, sometimes in outlying areas that lacked basic facilities of the city proper - paved streets, adequate sewage, sanitation facilities. Ghetto dwellings were the most dilapidated, often in ruined and devastated conditions because of bombings and shellings, looting and wanton vandalism. The air was fetid; the streets were filthy. There was terrifying overcrowding. Three and four families lived in a space adequate for one. Toilets, running water, all plumbing and sewer facilities were taxed beyond capacity and beyond repair. In the long winters of bitter Polish cold, the water in the pipes froze. Staying warm took priority over cleanliness. In Warsaw coal was called "black pearls"¹⁷ In Warsaw, a Jewish historian, Emanuel Ringelbaum, wrote in his diary in mid-November 1941, "the most fearful sight is that of freezing children 'standing' dumplly weeping in the streets with bare feet, bare knees, and torn clothing."¹⁸ In December 1941, the German confiscated whatever furs could be taken from the Polish Jews. They took men's and women's fur coats and fur linings, neck pieces, fur collars, fur cuffs, skins, and sheepskins.¹⁹

Hunger in the Ghetto

Hunger subjugated the ghetto. German policy was to starve the Jews and starvation stalked the great ghettos of the General Government. The weekly portion was :

Meat / meat products	none
Fat	2 1/2 oz.
Bread	3.3 lbs.
Potatoes	4.4 lbs. 20

Hunger obsessed everyone. Hunger injured the mind. Hunger drove some to rapacity. Beggars lined the streets of large ghettos, ubiquitous and commonplace, their doleful songs and plaintive laments filling the air. Children predominated among them, but also whole families begged, huddled together in rugs, moaning, and wailing. Some beggars in their desperation ignored the curfew and went out at night, crying for bread. "In the surrounding silence of night," Ringelbum observed, "the cries of the hungry beggar children are terribly insistent."²¹

Hunger killed, but first it wrought disabling change- mental, psychological, and physical. Loss of weight and disappearance of subcutaneous fat aged and withered its victims. Hunger destroyed the normal rhythm of existence, affected the physical capacity to work and the mental ability to think. Nutrition deficiencies caused amenia, suppressed the senses. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea were the daily complaints of the hungry. From September to December 1939, 4 Jews died of hunger ; in 1940, 91 died; and in 1941, nearly 11,000.²²

Breeding on human misery, typhus is associated with times of war, famine, and disaster, when people are crowded together in abnormal conditions of filth, cold, and hunger. The range of fatality varies from 5 to

25 percent. In the Warsaw ghetto the death toll from typhus was estimated at 15 percent, even though the Germans prevented proper treatment- basically maintenance of nutrition- and refused to allow the necessary preventive measures to be taken and enforced. The relatively moderate death rate testifies to the physical, indeed moral, stamina of the ghetto inhabitants. In the Warsaw ghetto alone, epidemic typhus was believed to have affected between 100,000 to 150,000 persons.²³

Life as

Sanctification
of God

In the ghettos death had become a ubiquitous intimate. Its ubiquity and its intimacy heightened the value of life. The preservation of life stood at the very center of Jewish tradition : "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and Mine ordinances , which if a man do, he shall live by them."²⁴ Rabbis in the ghettos declared that "Every Jew who survives openly sanctifies God."²⁵ Others prayed: "For the sake of heaven, Jews, don't despair."²⁶ The solidarity of the family provided the biological basis for the preservation of life and for Jewish continuity. The Jewish community was the extended Jewish family. At the bottom , Jews shared a deep faith in their ultimate survival and in the preservation of the Jewish people. Early in the war, the chronicler Chaim Kaplan observed : "Our existence as a people will not be destroyed. Individuals will be destroyed, but the Jewish community will live on."²⁷

Who shall live ,
who shall die.

Like a tornado the *Einsatzgruppen* swept through the Jewish settlements of Eastern Europe in the summer of 1941, destroying age-old communities in cyclonic upheaval. In many ghettos pogroms and deportations to concentration camps and death camps started. The Nazi destruction policy of the Jews moved in three directions: mass killings by the *Einsatzgruppen* and their collaborators, killings in and deportations from the ghettos, and the expansion and intensification of the concentration and death camps. The disaster was epic: "There was everywhere terrible grief. Everywhere panic, and death in full many a form."²⁹

On September 15, 1941, a month after the Kovno (Lithuania) Jews had been enclosed in a ghetto, the Germans sealed off the ghetto. Working parties assigned to outside labor were not permitted to leave. The next day the Germans delivered 5,000 cards to the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council), with orders that they were to be distributed to skilled workers. Signed by SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Jordan, specialist for Jewish affairs in the German administration of Kovno, these cards became known in the ghetto as "Jordan permits". Nearly 30,000 Jews then lived in the Kovno ghetto, some 6,000 to 7,000 having been already murdered by units of the *Einsatzgruppe*. The "Jordan cards" were described by the Germans as *Lebensscheins*-life permits. What had seemed to be a mere administrative procedure turned into ultimate judgment as to who would live and, in consequence of the German decision, who would die.³¹ There were constant "selections" from the ghetto and killings became a daily routine. Jews were ordered in marches before German officers, who with a flicker of their fingers, indicated who was to go to the right, who to the left, who was to live, who was to die. On October 28, nearly ten thousand people of the Kovno ghetto were segregated and shot. These killings were part of *Aktions*, a term meaning "activity" or "process", which was used by the Nazis to refer to killing procedures.³²

In Vilna over 20,000 of 60,000 Jews vanished or were killed outright from the time the *Einsatzgruppen* entered the city until the Jews were enclosed in Vilna's ghetto on September 6, 1941³³ Once the Jews were shut up within the walls of Vilna's ghettos, more systematic seizures and killings began. Armed German and Lithuanian police would surround the ghetto, removing hundreds or thousands at a time. By mid-September another ten thousand Jews had vanished.³⁴

The Jews as

Slaves of the Nazis

The killing began in the Wartheland as it began to wind down in the Eastern territories. In many areas SS troops and local collaborators routed up the Jews from hundreds of villages into larger communities. On December 16, 1941, the German authorities issued an order to the *Judenrat* of the Lodz ghetto that 20,000 would have to leave. The "selection" had to be made by the *Judenrat*. After the first deportations beginning on February 22nd 1,000 Jews were daily deported from the Lodz ghetto to an unknown destination. The Germans established the ranking categories for deportations: underworld elements, criminals, welfare recipients, non working-people (people who did not have working permit.)³⁵ The Nazis established in the ghettos a slave trade society and market.

At the end of 1941 or early 1942, two escaped Jews from the Chelmno death camp came to Warsaw, with an agonizing account of the annihilation camp where Jews were being gassed to death. The communal leaders thought that these young men must have been undergone such desolating experiences that they had become deranged. The staff of the communal leadership recorded their report, but withheld distribution because of its implausibility,

not wishing further to agitate the inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto, whose existence was wretched enough without such tales.³⁶

Mass Deportations from the Ghettos

All through the spring of 1942 facts and rumors about the mysterious and terrifying mass deportations in Poland and other occupied territories continued to filter into Warsaw. Many were convinced that the mass killings in Vilna marked the start of the liquidation of all Polish Jewry. Rumors circulated that the deportees from the various ghettos are being killed. On February 1, 1942, a Warsaw ghetto newspaper published its first report about the mass gassings: "From Kolo, Izbica, Dabie, Klodawa come dreadful reports about the brutal annihilation by crazed Hitleriates of the remaining scant Jewish settlements. The Jews are expelled and put to death from Jewish settlements. They are confined and killed with gas."³⁷

On July 21, 1942, SS-*Sturmabfuhrer* Hans Hofle, the resettlement commissioner for the Warsaw ghetto, gave the Judenrat formal typed instructions for deportations. All Warsaw Jews, regardless of age and sex, were to be resettled in the East, except for those employed by German enterprises, Judenrat staff, Jewish police, and Jewish hospital personnel and their families. Those to be deported could take with them 30 lbs. of personal property, valuables, and provisions for three days. The instruction specified that the Judenrat was to be responsible for delivering six thousand Jews daily to the place of assembly. The Jewish population was to be informed that anyone leaving the ghetto without authorization would be shot, that any Jew committing an act intended to evade or interfere with resettlement measures

would be shot, and that all the Jews at the conclusion of the resettlement who did not belong to the exempt categories would be shot. The chairman of *Judenrat*, Adam Czerniakow, won a few exceptions: vocational school students and husbands of working women. SS-*Sturmabfuhrer* Hofle refused Czerniakow's plea to save children in institutions. After the refusal Czerniakow committed suicide. He left two suicide notes, one to his wife and one to his colleagues: "I am powerless. My heart trembles in sorrow and compassion. I can no longer bear all this. My act will prove to everyone what is the right thing to do."³⁸ The deportations were the beginning of the end of the Warsaw ghetto. Of the more than 350,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto on July 22, 1942 no more than 45,000 or so remained, about 60 percent between the ages of twenty and thirty nine.³⁹ German and Ukrainian armed police patrolled the ghetto, shooting Jews on sight. The streets were strewn with Jewish bodies. On the High Holy Days, the Germans carried out one more roundup, perhaps one for sadistic gratification. Over 2,000 Jews were taken, including some 600 Jewish policemen.

On September 20, 1942 a Warsaw ghetto underground paper titled its lead article: "The annihilation of the Warsaw Jews" and warned the Jews: "Be on guard! Don't let yourselves be destroyed like sheep! Better to die with honor than to be gassed in Treblinka. ... We must survive, so that we demand a reckoning for the tortured brothers and sisters, children and parents who were killed by the murderer's hand on the battlefield for freedom and humanity."⁴⁰ The report came too late for the 300,000 Warsaw Jews deported. But it heralded the resistance to come.

Slaughter of Jews
in the Baltic States
and Ukraine- Babi Yar

Mass deportations and slaughter of Jews also took place in the Ukraine. Here, too, the Jews suffered almost total annihilation by the Nazis and their Ukrainian collaborators. In Kiev and many other areas where there were Jews, mass slaughter was so swift, it precluded ghettos. In Kiev, for example, in two days, September 29-30, 1941, over 33,000 Jews were killed in the ravine *Babi Yar* - a greater killing rate than of the gas chambers of Auschwitz at their murderous peak. *Einsatzgruppe C*, *Sonderkommando 4a*, aided by several hundred from two Ukrainian police regiments, assembled in the Kiev area on September 25, under the command of Colonel Paul Blobel. Final preparations were made for a decisive action "carried out exclusively against Jews with their entire families", as a top secret report revealed.⁴¹ On September 28, about 2,000 notices were posted throughout the city:

"All Jews of the city of Kiev and its environs must appear on the corner of Melnikov and Dokhturov Streets (beside the cemetery) at 8:00 A.M. on September 29, 1941. They must bring with them their documents, money, valuables, warm clothing, etc

Jews who fail to obey this order and are found elsewhere will be shot. All who enter the apartments left by Jews and take their property will be shot."⁴²

These notices were printed in Russian, Ukrainian, and German. The street names were misspelled, but the designation near the cemetery was clear. The notices were accompanied by a rumor deliberately planned by the *Sonderkommando* that the Jews were to be evacuated and resettled elsewhere, thus giving plausibility to the actions. Because most the able-bodied men were in the Red Army, the thousands of Jews who assembled were mostly women, children, and the old and sick. A description describes "how the doomed marched ; mothers carried their babies ; the paralyzed

pilled along on hand carts." 43 The victims were ordered to remove their clothing and deposit in neat piles all that they had brought with them. Before the shooting began, they had to run a gauntlet of rubber truncheons and big sticks. As described by Soviet writer Anatoly Kuznetsov in his book *Babi Yar*, they were "kicked, beaten with brass knuckles and clubs...with drunken viciousness and in a strange sadistic franzy." 44 The first persons selected for shooting were forced to lie naked face down at the bottom of the ravine and were shot with automatic rifles. Some earth was thrown over the bodies and another group had to lie on top of the others. Later, the victims were placed at the edge of the ravine, sixty yards long and eight feet wide, and shot in the back of the neck. Some, still writhing, were buried alive." 45 For weeks, afterward the *Einsatzgruppe* continued to hunt down Jews in hiding, combing apartments and houses. In November many Russian Jewish prisoners of war were executed at Babi Yar. Later, many thousands of Russians and Ukrainians were also slaughtered there. In August 1943, when the Red Army began its counter-offensive, Blobel was ordered to erase all traces of the Babi Yar massacres. 46

The largest group of *Einsatzgruppe A* with 900 men operated in the Baltic states. In the *Einsatzgruppe A* Report, as of October 15, 1941, 114,197 Jews had been killed in the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. White Russia was the area covered by *Einsatzgruppe B* which was commanded by Arthur Nebe, a police detective in the Weimar Republic and a member of the Gestapo since 1933. Nebe's squad executed 45,000 Jews in White Russia within five months.

The goals of the *Einsatzgruppen* and the Nazis was simple : to kill every Jew; none could remain alive. 47

The Descendance
to the Abyss-
The Concentration
and Death Camps

The concentration camps as a tool of political persecution had not existed in the German Reich before the National Socialist came to power. As early as the second month of the National Socialist coalition government- when the first camps were established- and until the final defeat in 1945, the concentration camps, however, were an integral component of the Nazi system of domination. Their significance grew and their function expanded as the support for the National-Socialists increased and endured.⁴⁸

At the beginning of the war against the Soviet Union, the Nazis instituted the systematic extermination of entire population groups. The army, SS and SD had to conduct this "battle of ideologies" with variable emphasis. The camps of Auschwitz and Lublin-Majdanek in Poland, became the focus of mass extermination of the Jewish population. Here, in the most horrible manner, the demands of the Nazis were turned into reality. Even if the face of defeat, and while forced to harness all their economic forces to enable the continuation of the war, the Nazis did not renounce one of their most important objectives- the establishment of *Rassenherrschaft* (racial domination) in Europe. Even when it became clear that the material objectives of the war- the conquest of new territories- were unlikely to be realized, the Nazi leadership continued to pursue their ideological aims. The concentration camps had to serve two objectives- the ideological as well as the material objective- presupposed by an apparatus of violence by which they could be realized. The SS maintained this double objective almost to the last moment; only with the beginning of the dismantling of the concentration

camps themselves did the gassing of the Jews cease.⁴⁹

The history of the concentration camps demonstrates that political persecution, economic coercion and ideologically based extermination were firmly linked in the National-Socialist system.⁵⁰

The network of camps encompassed all of occupied Europe during the period the Third Reich. When the war broke out at the beginning of September 1939, there were six concentration camps in the Reich: Dachau, Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg, Mauthausen, Flossenbug, Buchenwald, and the Ravensbruck women's camp- housing some 21,000 internees. From 1933 to 1939, 165,000-170,000 prisoners were interned in concentration camps.⁵¹

With the outbreak of the war, the camps entered a new stage. The number of internees rose significantly, and, under the conditions, there was an increased need to make direct use of the camps for the war efforts. The war increased the necessity for utilizing the economic substructure, including manpower, of the occupied territories in order to strengthen the Reich. Consequently a large number of labor and concentration camps were erected, a process which reached its height in 1942-1944.⁵²

The Nazi policy regarding the Jews also changed after September 1939, when the official attitude toward Jewish emigration from German controlled territories was altered drastically. Instead of pressuring the Jews into leaving the Reich,, the Germans turned to other methods in order to "solve the Jewish question" The policy of outlawing Jews by stripping them of their civil and human rights continued with increasing severity. After economic decrees and the imposition of forced labor came the isolation of the Jews and their concentration in ghettos. This paved the way for "the final solution of the Jewish question" - starting with sporadic killings during the first days of the occupation, and continuing, according to Nazi policy regarding the solution of the Jewish question, with mass executions by the

Einsatzgruppen in the East to the next stage of mass extermination in the death camps. The concentration camps became one of the most important links in the execution of this policy.⁵³

The technical means and training of the staff that later facilitated the execution of the "final solution" also were crystallized. These included the use of gas to kill chronic mental cases within the framework of the "euthanasia" program. This program lasted from September 1939 until its official cessation in August 1941 and claimed between 80,000 and 100,000 victims, including approximately 1,000 Jews. The "gas vans", which were operated by the *Einsatzgruppen* on the Eastern front and in the Semlin camp, were used in the murder of 97,000 to 100,000 persons. The policy of "selection" i.e., the murder of "less worthy" camp prisoners continued until April 1942 and led to the death of some 20,000 prisoners.⁵⁴

The concentration camps between 1939 to the beginning of 1942 received new aims : to suppress the occupied countries and to exploit the prisoners' labor in order to aid the German war effort. Regarding the Jewish question, the foundations were laid at this junction for the transformation of all the various kinds of camps into principal instruments in the execution of the "final solution", and, in fact, mass extermination began in the Chelmno camp in December 1941. The concepts and methods that were tested and consolidated at this time were carried out on a wider scale and at a faster pace from 1942 onward, almost until the end of the war.⁵⁵

From March 1942 until the end of the War, the war and Germany's economic requirements led to an intensification of the German policy of exploiting the economic potential of the occupied lands. Himmler intended to strengthen still further the network of camps as a political and economic foundation for the SS in the National-Socialist regime and the German state.⁵⁶ From March 1942 onward the camps developed in two directions :

unprecedented exploitation of labor one hand, and mass killing of Jews on the other hand. The "final solution " continued to be the central target of Nazi policy even when some of the Jews were to put in concentration camps and branch camps.⁵⁷ There is an estimate that in the mid- 1944, there were some twenty main concentration camps and over 2,000 different branch camps. There were 2,000 different camps in Poland alone. In an encyclopedia of Nazi camps that appeared in Poland, 5,877 internment sites are mentioned , including camps, branch camps, prisons, closed working sites and ghettos.⁵⁸

The Death Camps.

The death camps played a decisive role in the " final solution of the Jewish question" in Europe. These camps were established with one specific purpose- mass extermination. The camps included:

Chelmno- the extermination process lasted, with interruptions, from December 8, 1941 to mid-January 1945.

Belzec- established in November 1941. Gas was used for exterminating prisoners from February 1942 until the beginning of 1942.

The camp was liquidated in June 1943.

Sobibor- operational- from April 1942 to mid-October 1943.

Treblinka- in 1940 Treblinka was established as a labor camp. At the beginning of 1942, the construction of Treblinka II was undertaken. Mass extermination using gas took place from July 23, 1942 to August 2, 1943.

Lublin-Majdanek- established in November 1941, Mass extermination began in the fall of 1942 and continued until July 1944

Auschwitz- Auschwitz I was established as a concentration camp in

May 1940. In Auschwitz II (Birkenau) gas chambers and crematoria were in use from November 26, 1941 to November 1944.⁵⁹

The method of the gas camps was the following : " a man would step off a train and by the evening his corpse was burned and his clothes packed away to Germany." ⁶⁰ Thus the German murder machine worked methodically and efficiently and in no way allowed the millions who were sent to their deaths to consider what was in store for them or prepare them to resist.

The number of Jewish victims of the death camps may be estimated between 3, 300. 000 and 3, 500. 000 million. Of the total number of victims of the Holocaust- which is estimated 6, 000. 000 million-close to 60 percent of the Jews who died, perished in the death camps.⁶¹

The Nazis were ambivalent toward the forced labor of prisoners for as long as concentration camps were in existence. On the one hand forced labor was a means of extermination, but on the other hand, it was supposed to increase Germany's capacity for war.⁶²

The concentration camps served as slave markets where large German concerns selected their cheap labor. These firms paid the SS. For example I. G. Farben paid over 20 million marks into the SS coffers in a two and half year period between June 23, 1943 to February 1945. Given the large sums the SS received, it is hardly surprising that there was a saying in SS circles : " The concentration camps support us." ⁶³

More than anything else of the Nazi regime, the concentration and the death camps embodied the true destructive nature of Nazism.⁶⁴ "The concentration camps for the SS were a small, experimental state of their own." ⁶⁵ A young Polish writer, who had experienced the horrors of

Auschwitz and apparently haunted by them until his tragic death, regarded "everyone who had been a prisoner in the camps and even those, who had only lived through the concentration-camp era as defiled." To him, the phenomenon of camps constituted the foundation of "a gruesome new civilization."⁶⁶

The camps were the exclusive domain of the SS, and Himmler developed the concentration-camp network into a source of intense political influence and economic power. Although Himmler was not always able to abolish legal ways and judicial authority entirely from the state institutions, he nevertheless succeeded in creating within the framework of the camps an enclave that was beyond the law.⁶⁷

The Nazi concentration and death camps may thus be taken as indicative what could happen to human beings when treated with unbounded cruelty by a group of men trained and guided by racial ideology.⁶⁸ The camps were a foremost instrument of the Nazi party and the SS to carry out the extreme measures dictated by the regime and the Nationalist-Socialist ideology, and to increasing terrorization of a certain group of people considered hostile or dangerous to the regime, and finally, during the war years, as a site for the concentration and physical liquidation of certain groups within the occupied countries and a center for the total extermination of the Jewish people.⁶⁹

As far as the Jews were concerned, the Nazis' aim was quite clear. In the summer of 1944, when the Nazi regime and the German front were in extremely critical position, more than 420,000 Jews, who had hitherto lived under relatively normal conditions, were brought to Auschwitz from Hungary. Only a small, random percentage of the arrivals were selected and sent to work in the camps; the rest, including children, the sick, men and women above the age of fifty, as well as tens of thousands of able-bodied,

skilled people were taken straight to the gas chambers. Even when Himmler gave orders that certain categories of Jews were not to be exterminated since as skilled workers they were necessary to the German war effort, he added that "there, too, in accordance with the wish of the Fuhrer, the Jews are some day to disappear."⁷⁰

Even at the Camps Jews Maintained a Noble Soul

For the Jews in the vast kingdom of hundreds of concentration camps, death camps, and labor camps, one day was indistinguishable from another: long days from dawn to darkness, with the same endless roll-call, the same meager food, the same long marches to and from work, the same deadly blows. It was place where the only variant was the hour of one's death. Yet a significant number of Jews clung, under the threat of death, to their tradition and did not succumb to the monotonous camp cadence that spelled total dehumanization.⁷¹ The day in the concentration camp began at dawn with a roll-call. Some observant Jews began their day earlier with morning prayers, despite the penalty of death. Under the striped uniform and cap, they maintained a soul in search of meaning.

In the camps, the Sabbath was a regular forced-labor day. The observant Jews, however, even while slaving like everybody else, managed at times to sanctify a few of the day's moments with the recitation of the holy blessing over two slices of stale bread that he managed to save. It was not only a moment that sustained him during the rest of the week, but the planning for it and "organizing was source of triumph that he was able to outmaneuver the Nazi system- if only reciting a single blessing over two

pieces of bread."72

Passover was a most timely promise in the camps with its message of freedom, hope, and deliverance from bondage. Indeed, the number of testimonies of the observance of Passover in the concentration camps is overwhelming. The fact that numerous camps were liberated around Passover in 1945, adds to this unique dimension.73

In the vast network of camps, observant Jews snatched away moments from oblique reality and sanctified them. These moments helped the inmates to cling to a pre-World War II reality and create a link with the future; the hope that even they, the modern slaves, would hear the footsteps of the Messiah; the dream that one day World War II would come to an end.

Dante's Inferno on Earth

But World War II. seemed to drag on endlessly. The condition of the victims deteriorated. The executioner perfected his methods, and the concentration-camp reality could have shamed *Dante's Inferno* and made *Abel's Satan* look like a novice. Many inmates lost the last surviving members of their family, their last friends. Man descended deeper into the abyss, stripped of everything-family, friends, and even his flesh, as it was eaten away by disease and starvation.74

Nazi Doctors - The Most Brutal Killers

In the concentration camps there was a transformation of healers,

doctors, to the most brutal killers. Medicalized killing can be understood in two ways. One is the efficient or "surgical" method of killing a large number of people by means of a controlled technology making use of a highly poisonous gas. The other dimension of the medicalized killing is killing as therapeutic imperative. This kind of imagery was dramatically revealed in the words of an SS doctor, quoted by a distinguished survivor-physician, Dr. Ella Lingens-Reiner, in response to a question she was able to ask him in Auschwitz. Pointing to the chimney in the distance, she asked, "How can you reconcile that with your Hippocratic Oath? To which the answer was: "When you find a dangerous appendix you must remove it." The image here is of the Jews as a gangrenous disease, which has to be removed from the social or racial body of the German people in order to bring about cure.⁷⁵

Hitler, in his chapter in Mein Kampf on the German state, wrote the following: "... anyone who wants to cure this era, which is inwardly sick and rotten, must first of all summon up courage to make clear the causes of this disease."⁷⁶ Hans Frank, jurist and head of the General- Government, stated that "the Jews were a lower species of life, a kind of vermin, which upon contact infected the German people with deadly diseases". Frank frequently referred to the Jews as "lice", and when the Jews in concentration and death camps were killed, he declared that "now a sick Europe will become healthy again."⁷⁷

In the concentration and death camps an almost religious will of an "all encompassing metaphysical principle" developed.⁷⁸ What the Nazis "willed" was nothing less than total control over life and death, and control of the evolutionary process. Making widespread use of the Darwinian term "selection" in the camps the Nazis sought to take over the functions of nature (natural selection) and God in orchestrating their own selections, their own version of human evolution.⁷⁹

The SS doctor made the initial large-scale "selections" in the camps and especially in Auschwitz. The task was performed quickly, massively, and often according to formula, so that old people, children, and women with children were automatically selected for gas, while relatively intact young adults were permitted to survive, at least temporarily. The great majority of arriving Jews in Auschwitz- most estimates are more than 70 percent- were quickly sent to the gas chamber. As no medical skill was required for this function- no medical examination was done-it would seem that the Nazis sought to invest it with medical authority, to represent it as medical procedure.⁸⁰

The same doctor was driven in a SS vehicle, usually marked with a red cross, together with a medical technician, to a gas chamber adjoining one of the crematoria. There the doctors had supervisory responsibility for properly carrying out the process, though the medical technician actually inserted the gas pellets and the entire sequence became so routine that little intervention was required. The doctor also had the task of declaring those inside the gas chamber dead, which in some cases meant looking through a peephole to observe them. This, too, became routinized, a matter of permitting twenty minutes or so to pass before the doors of the gas chamber could be opened and the bodies removed.⁸¹

The doctor's participation in the selections, then, was the first of a series of tasks involving the whole sequence of the killing process.

Doctors' technical knowledge was also called upon concerning such things as the burning of the bodies, a great problem in Auschwitz during the summer of 1944, when the rapid arrival and destruction of the enormous number of Hungarian Jews strained the facilities of the crematoria.[among them the author's mother]. These technical matters could include questions of physics- of maintaining great heat, of situations of maximum and minimum

burning, and of the overall function of the mechanical facilities of the crematoria.⁸²

Doctors also had to witness executions, as part of their general function of declaring people dead and had to sign various documents certifying that one could proceed with a punitive procedure. This latter function implied that an inmate could survive the particular punishment ordered- such as a certain number of blows with whip.⁸³

Doctors were involved in killing by injections, usually of phenol, into the heart or the blood system. This procedure was widely employed prior to the complete functioning of the gas chambers and was often used for very debilitated patients or for secret political murders.⁸⁴

It can be concluded that the doctors in concentration and death camps and in the whole Nazi system carried considerable responsibilities- for choosing the victims, for the physical and psychological mechanism of the process, and for the general equilibrium of the killing and work-function in the camps.⁸⁵

In the camps doctors conducted various medical experiments for specific biological and military purposes ordered by the regime and *ad hoc* experiments done allegedly as part of the scientific interest on the part of the SS doctor.

In Auschwitz the first category consisted mainly of sterilization experiments- injections of caustic substances into the uterine cervix of women and the use of X-rays to the genital organs of men and women with eventual surgical removal of the testicles or ovaries to study the effects of the X-rays. These experiments were actively promoted by Himmler, who believed that the doctors are on the verge of achieving efficient and economic methods for large-scale sterilization of inferior peoples. Experiments were done at camps on cold immersion and exposure to high pressure as at high

altitudes; with sulfonamides and other therapeutic agents or artificially created wound infections and gangrene; and on the effectiveness of various serum for typhus and yellow fever.

Among the individual doctors who desired to "scientific work", the largest *ad hoc* experiments in Auschwitz were done by Joseph Mengele and Eduard Wirth. Mengele worked mainly with twins, but also with dwarfs, and to a lesser extent, with certain medical conditions, such as noma (tumor-like infectious ulceration of the mouth and face, which can often become gangrenous.)⁸⁶ Mengele would on various occasions one or both twins- usually children killed- because of a particular interest in a post-mortem finding.

Eduard Wirths' experiments were meant to be a "legitimate" study of precancerous growth of the cervix in women. The most destructive aspect of these experiments involved the surgical removal of all or most of the cervix.⁸⁷ Wirth also became involved in the experimental trial of a new typhus vaccine, in which inmates were first artificially infected with the disease, and which resulted in many cases in death. (Such experiments with infectious disease [especially typhus, because of its danger to German military and civilian personnel] were performed on a very large scale in other camps.)⁸⁸

Nazi doctors collected Jewish skulls. A doctor's letter written to Himmler expressed the idea behind the collection of the Jewish skulls by saying that the skulls were needed, especially of "Jewish Bolshevik Commissars" to study the evil manifestation of this disappearing and despised race.⁸⁹

In Auschwitz as well in other camps, killing was done in the name of healing. One can say that every action an SS doctor took was connected to some kind of perversion or reversal of healing and killing.⁹⁰

The doctors were part of the terror apparatus of the concentration and death camps. One of the great tragedies connected with the concentration and death camps was that most of the people in charge of and serving in these camps were ordinary people. But senior staff of these camps, whose behavior by and large determined the atmosphere, were drilled previously in the early camps to a completely uninhibited brutality. Common to all the staff was a profound amorality deriving from service of the daily death machinery and from the practically unlimited possibilities of becoming rich on the goods of the deported prisoners.⁹¹

The Tragic Enormity of the Camps

The Nazi concentration camp represents the most extreme situation for survival known to man. It was a central component in a system designed for killing many millions of human beings, primarily the Jews of Europe. These tormented people were all condemned to death, but the process took time, and was not uniform, as it involved the killing of scattered people in twenty-two different states and regions. Even in the death camps, there was a technical limit to the numbers that could be killed every day. Meanwhile, as the processing for death went on inexorably, there was a delay in the death of those selected to work at various jobs in the death camps. Others were selected for a variety of slave labor under conditions that resulted in the death of many from injuries inflicted, exhaustion, exposure, disease and starvation. Furthermore, the motivation to continue the struggle to live in concentration camps was constantly and deliberately undermined by the ruthless system of unprecedented terrorization and dehumanization.⁹²

The Struggle to Survive

The struggle for life in these extremities of the concentration and death camps depended on solidarity on social bonding and interchange, and life even in Auschwitz and Buchenwald and other camps was intensely social. There was mutual help and continued sharing, and, in some cases, an intensely disciplined underground organization based on teamwork and the creation of social network. There was a need for "an awareness of the common predicament" and the need to act collectively.⁹³ Furthermore, human reciprocity in the group and dyadic relations, by sustaining the morale and the motivation to continue to struggle to live on in the Nazi concentration camps, increased the chances of eventual survival.⁹⁴

As a social therapist and an ex- Buchenwald inmate, put it: "None of us who have survived would be here unless there had been others who helped us in our survival."⁹⁵

The Barbarity of the Camps

All inmates were marked for eventual extermination ; it was merely a question of time, but meanwhile, from hour to hour and day to day, "through innumerable small acts of humanness, most of them covert, but everywhere in evidence, survivors were able to maintain social structures workable enough to keep themselves alive and morally sane."⁹⁶

It would seem that whenever conditions were relatively predictable and routine, no matter how extreme the dehumanization and brutalization, spontaneous bonding occurred between the victims. After the violent shock

of induction into the camp system, and within a few days of arrival, pairing and group formation would develop.

Words cannot fully describe, nor the mind completely grasp, what went on in the concentration and death camps. The magnitude and degree of brutality, suffering, and sorrow are beyond human understanding. The horror of the camps extended far down the railroad tracks that carried Jews to death. Jammed unto traincars, Jewish deportees faced long journeys in conditions so unbearable that many persons were dead on arrival. Those still living were routed from the cars at the destination. Thereafter, the routine varied from place to place. In some camps- Treblinka for example-entire transports were sent directly to the gas chambers. At Auschwitz, which was both a labor and a killing installation, a more elaborate procedure was followed.⁹⁷

Men and women were separated. Children, usually, those under fourteen, remained with their mothers. Selection by a doctor sent to the right those fit for work; to the left the sick, aged, crippled, and the women with children. The group sent left, prodded by Nazi guards and inmate work crews, moved off to the gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau, the killing section of Auschwitz.

The others, momentary survivors, were left to work, always subject to further "selections" consigning them to gas and flame. What eventually developed was a slave society therefore unseen in human history; work was performed quite literally by persons on their way to die, not merely due to sickness or weakness, for only one reason: they were Jews.

In the concentration and death camps housing and sanitation were abominable. Beatings, hangings, and shooting occurred at the slightest provocation or with none at all. Bizarre medical experiments performed on human guinea pigs, sexual abuse, disease, torture, and constant fear- every

affliction of body and spirit was abundantly and continually present. Apart from infrequent acts of kindness from outsiders and the sharing that inmates could- and often did- provide each other, death was the only release.⁹⁸

Death stalked the barracks relentlessly. Every prisoner was vulnerable, but especially the Jews ; and none more so than those forced to work in closest contact with the gas chambers and crematoria. Nazi intent was that there should be no Jewish witnesses.⁹⁹ Their own camp personnel was sworn to silence, and a vocabulary of euphemisms was used to mask mass murder

In the concentration and death camps dirt and excrement were permanent conditions of existence. In the barracks at night, for example, "buckets of excrement stood in a little passage by the exit. There were not enough. By dawn the whole floor was awash with urine and feces." Sickness made things worse : "Everybody in the block had typhus...it came to Bergen Belsen in its most violent, most painful, deadliest form. The diarrhea caused by it became uncontrollable. It flooded the bottom of cages, dripping through the cracks into the faces of the women lying in the cages below, and mixed with blood, pus and urine, formed a slimy, fetid mud on the floor of the barracks." ¹⁰⁰

Diarrhea was a deadly disease and a source of constant befoulment, but it was also dangerous for another reason- it forced prisoners to break rules: "Many women with diarrhea relieved themselves in soup bowls or pans for 'coffee'; then they hid the utensils under the mattress to avoid punishment threatening them for doing so; twenty five strokes on the bare buttocks, or kneeling all night long on sharp gravel, holding up bricks. These punishments often ended in the death of the 'guilty.'" ¹⁰¹

Prisoners were *systematically* subjected to filth.¹⁰² They were the deliberate target of excremental assault. Defilement was a constant threat, a

condition of life from day to day, and at any moment it was liable to take abruptly vicious and sometimes fatal forms. In the concentration and death camps there was no end to degradation. The principle of the degradation and defilement was to depress the morale of prisoners to the lowest possible level, thereby preventing the development or cooperation among the victims. "How much self-esteem can one maintain, how readily can one respond with respect to the needs of another, if both stink, if both are caked with mud and feces." ¹⁰³ Within the camps all visible signs of human beauty, of bodily pride and spiritual radiance, were to be eliminated from the ranks of the inmates. The prisoner was made to feel subhuman, to see his self- image only in the dirt and stink of his neighbor. The SS, on the contrary, appeared superior not only by virtue of their guns and assurance, but by their elegant apartness from the filth of the prisoner's world. In Auschwitz, prisoners were forced to march in mud, whereas the clean roadway was reserved for the SS. ¹⁰⁴

Death

Marches

On January 18, 1945 order was given to evacuate Auschwitz. Thousands who were too weak to march were shot in the camps themselves on the eve of evacuations. On the marches, tens of thousands were shot and killed wherever they chanced to stumble and fall. Anybody who was weak, anybody who had to sit down for a few minuets, was shot. ¹⁰⁵

A participant in a death march described the following scene :

The marchers were taken to a hut. Suddenly there was a call, ^① Hurry! The SS men are back ^② The excitement and the fear- I felt no pain any longer. I dragged my two friends, and crossed

to a place across the ground. This was public lavatories. We stood there and peeped through the cracks to what was going on in the camp. They started shooting from the towers, the watch towers around the camp... The SS men set fire to the huts where the people took shelter and where they were hiding. They stood facing the doors with machine guns, and if anyone ran out of the burning huts, they were shot immediately. Those who did not run were burned alive. My friends and myself decided that they would be coming to the lavatories as well and set fire. Then we jumped through the seat into the pit, and this was the worst experience of my life. When we entered those pits of the excrement, sinking, sinking slowly- and one does not know how deep we were sinking. The excrement reached up to my chest, and all of sudden, I felt solid ground under my feet... The smell of the burning of wood from the huts, the noise of the flames, and the half-burned people, those who were shot but not dead- they all formed this terrible experience, the worst I went through in those camps, far worse than the moment when a sentence of death was delivered against myself.¹⁰⁶

As the death marches continued from the Auschwitz area and others started from other camps, tens of thousands of Jews were shot, their bodies thrown into the nearest roadside ditches. (The author was in a death march for eight weeks- two of his relatives who were weak and wounded were shot and thrown into a roadside ditch) The marchers were also afflicted by lice and typhus, lack of food, and total further dehumanization took place by eating everything that looked edible. None of those who survived the 'death marches' can forget the horror. "On the death march from Auschwitz", one survivor later recalled, "German women heard we were prisoners, and threw boiled potatoes. Those who picked up the potatoes died with a bullet- and a hot potato in their mouths."¹⁰⁷

Another survivor recalled:

We started counting the shots. It was a long column - five thousand people. We know every shot meant a human life. Sometimes the count reaches five "hundred", in a single

day. And the longer we marched, the more the number of shots increased. There was no strength, no food. One night, the four thousand survivors were locked in a long concrete bunker, an air raid shelter. We felt that we had no air, that there was no air in this bunker, and those groups were far from the door felt it much more than we did, and the screams, the tragic scenes, began 'Air! air!...'

In the morning, a thousand corpses were found in the bunker.. It was death by suffocation, horrible positions, naked, on their knees and with their mouths to the concrete floor. That's where the last pockets of air were. From the pores of the concrete, they got the last bit of air. 108

The earth of Europe is saturated with Jewish blood.

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CHAPTER 6

"Not Like Sheep to Slaughter"*

In 1993, 50 years after the Warsaw Ghetto uprising an accurate and comprehensive assessment of the Jewish resistance to the Nazis and the Holocaust is emerging.

Some earlier writers on the Holocaust like Raul Hilberg, in The Destruction of the European Jews, submitted that the Jews actually aided the Germans in achieving their genocidal aims by "going like sheep to slaughter"[the phrase stems from a famous resistance fighter in the Vilna Ghetto, Abba Kovner, who appealed to Jews "not to go like sheep to slaughter"*;¹ Bruno Bettelheim, in the Informal Heart, concluded that the Jewish inmates of the concentration camps lost their "will to live", thereby expousing a "death wish"², and Hannah Arendt, in Eichmann in Jerusalem, said that the Jews were, to a great extent, responsible for their own death, claiming that they collaborated [through the *Judenraten*] with the Germans.³

Today such judgements shall be considered a tortured analysis of historical fact and a misunderstanding of the conditions that existed in the ghettos, concentration and death camps of Europe. To the frequently asked question of whether there was Jewish resistance, the answer is yes !

Not only did Jews take part in every phase of the general resistance movements in the occupied countries, but there was a specific Jewish resistance which manifested itself in most surprising and unusual ways. This was so not only in countries such as Poland, the Baltic States, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania, where there were large, cohesive Jewish communities, but also in countries where Jews were a very small percent of the population.

What is Resistance ?

The word "resistance " usually connotes an organized, armed, collective action, carried out according to the rules of military strategies. But resistance is a concept which includes persons who resisted passively, who participated in uprisings in ghettos , concentration and death camps, who fought in partisan units in the forests, who participated in general underground movements. It also includes Jews who fought, knowing that certain death awaited them, but wanted to demonstrate the courage of the Jewish people and were willing to die for the Honor of the Nation [*K'vod Ha-am* in Jewish tradition].⁴ It includes still others who sacrificed their lives to rescue others, those who committed any act plainly against the laws of the German authorities or the goals of the " Final Solution."⁵

Attempting to stay alive another day was resistance. Escaping from the ghetto or hiding in a bunker was resistance. So was giving birth to a child, praying in congregation, singing, studying the Bible or Holy Books, bringing flowers into the ghetto, keeping archives, writing humor under the shadow of death, rescuing the Sacred Scrolls left lying in the streets.

One of the most brilliant aspects of Jewish life under these horrendous circumstances was in the area of spiritual resistance. Vilna, for example, which had for generations been a great Jewish cultural center called " The Jerusalem of Lithuania," became during the Holocaust " The Jerusalem of Ghettos"⁶, a symbol of spiritual resistance against the German authority. Aid for the needy was provided by organized social-aid groups, hospitals and infirmaries were established, free food centers were provided, schools and youth clubs were set up, theaters and choirs gave performances- all in the shadow of death. Jewish cultural life remained vital and creative. This, too,

was resistance.

One of strongest drives in a human being is his will to survive. No man wants to believe that he is about to be killed. He will hang on to any straw of hope, even to the point of self-delusion. When the infamous Nuremberg Laws were passed, the German Jews minimized their importance, allowing themselves to believe that these laws were only temporary measures.⁷ When Hitler announced his plan to destroy the Jewish people, very few believed it to be more than propaganda. Transports of Jewish children were taken away from their parents, on the pretext that they were being sent to a "summer camp"; the children were even forced to write postcards home.⁸ When eyewitnesses told the parents that their children were no longer alive, the parents produced the postcards and refused to believe the truth.⁹

The same desire to live manifested itself in the "normalization" of ghetto life- writing, singing, reading and other amenities of civilized life. In Therezienstadt operas were written. Painters and sculptors worked underground producing their particular art. The archivists of the Vilna Ghetto noted that on the morrow of an *Aktion* [selection] which took 5,000 Jews to their doom, a line of 400 people stood outside the library doors.¹⁰

Belief

in Goodness

The Jews maintained belief in goodness of the human being and in justice of mankind, and hoped that any day salvation would come. How can the world stand by idly, they asked themselves. How long can such events continue? Why risk losing redemption and freedom by taking up arms against a foe- the Allied Forces would surely raise their voices, destroy the ovens of Auschwitz, any day...any day, this was the 20th century and they

lived in Christian, civilized society. A poem found in the rubble of the destroyed Warsaw Ghetto, written by a 12 year-old boy, is a perfect example of naive hope :

From tomorrow on, I shall be sad-
 From tomorrow on !
 Today I will be happy.
 What is the use of sadness- tell me that ?
 Because evil winds begin to blow ?
 Why should I grieve for tomorrow
 Today ?
 Tomorrow may be so good, so sunny.

Tomorrow the sun may shine for us
 Again;
 We shall no longer to be sad.
 From tomorrow on, I shall be sad-
 From tomorrow on !
 Not today ; No ! Today I will be glad.
 And every day, no matter how bitter it
 be, I will say;
 From tomorrow on, I shall be sad-Not
 today.¹¹

Spiritual

Courage

In the case of Orthodox Jewry, the concept of heroism was interwoven with the idea of spiritual courage,, of sacrifice for the sake of religion, known as the Sanctification of the Name of God. [*Kiddush Hashem*] ¹² It was resistance stemming from religious inspiration and contained a deeply rooted ancestral heritage epitomized by the saying "*not by force but by the strength of spirit*" ¹³ Their attitude was that the world evil should not be fought and cannot be defeated by physical force because the struggle between

good and evil will be decided by Divine Providence. They believed that the recital of a chapter of the Psalms would do more to affect the course of events than killing Germans.¹⁴

Armed

Resistance

Dealing with Jewish armed resistance, the sad fact is that the Jewish underground and resistance movements, wherever they existed, were isolated from the outside world, and , for the most part, were refused aid by national resistance movements which existed in most of the occupied countries. Most of the native population, where there was a long record of anti-Semitism, was openly hostile to the Jews. In many instances they volunteered to aid in "The Final Solution." (see Chapter " The Good Old Days.")

In several countries the Nazi troops were met as liberators and not as conquerors. The Lithuanians population welcomed the German Army with flowers and cheers. In the streets of Vilna, the Nazi flag, the swastika, was flown next to the Lithuanian flag. Ukrainians, Letts, Estonians and others volunteered to help the Germans exterminate the Jews. Any active military resistance would have to be done alone, without any support, moral or physical.¹⁵ Escape was in many cases futile, for the natives would only turn the escapees over to the Germans.

Thus, any attempt of resistance was an implicit act of suicide, the only objective - The Honor of the Jewish Nation. The religious leaders considered such an act sinful.¹⁶ Still, there were Orthodox Jews who fought, resisted and actively participated in the underground.

The Germans used the concept of collective responsibility to

discourage the growth of resistance movements, as well as individual acts of resistance. For any such disorder, not only the individual would be punished by death, but the whole ghetto population.

Despite these obstacles, there were acts of resistance in every section of Nazi-occupied Europe.¹⁷

Questions and Strategies of Resistance

The strategy of resistance varied. Jews attempted survival through work as their first tactic. The overall strategy, accepted by a majority, was to make themselves useful in production to the German war effort so that at least some might survive.¹⁸ And indeed work kept the ghettos going for a time. Few Jews realized the primacy the Nazis attached to their extermination.¹⁹

Two issues dominated the question of resistance in the ghettos. The first, strongly advocated by various Judenrat [Jewish Council] leaders, was that through cooperation the ghetto could survive. When the Germans threatened to destroy the Vilna ghetto unless a resistance leader, Itzik Wittenberg, who had escaped, was handed over to them, the ghetto inhabitants clashed with the partisans' United Freedom Fighters Organization.²⁰ The head of the ghetto, Jacob Gens, actively tried to capture Wittenberg so that he could be handed over to the Germans. Wittenberg's Communist cell, aware of the opposition of the population, urged him to turn himself in to the Gestapo. Apparently he had the opportunity to commit suicide before his interrogation.²¹

Armed resistance took place in most of the ghettos.²² The most

dramatic was the revolt of the Warsaw ghetto [which will be covered later]. The Polish Right viewed the Warsaw ghetto revolt as instigated and carried out primarily by Communists. During the attacks the Polish population watched. Sympathy was with the Germans.²³

The situation in Poland for Jews in the ghettos was defined not only by ruthless commitment on the part of the Germans to kill them, but also by the fact that the major Polish resistance group [A K, Armia Krajowa, or Home Army,] was also explicitly anti-Semitic.²⁴

Rebellions in Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz

Resistance fighting was not limited to the ghettos. There were major rebellions in the death camps at Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz, and a number of small-scale fighting escapes from slave labor units.²⁵ Aside from occasional escapes attempted during transportation or on casual labor parties, resistance in the camps was the work of "old prisoners", those who kept themselves alive under the most extreme conditions. The typical adaption made by these men left them toughened to the point of indifference and seemingly contemptuous regard for the anguish surrounding them. It is impossible to exaggerate the psychological gulf separating old and new prisoners.²⁶ The general attitude of the former was described by Primo Levy, who survived 18 months in Auschwitz the following way:

"In history and life one sometimes seems to glimpse a ferocious law which states: 'To he that has, will be given; to he that has not, will be taken away.' In the Lager, where man is alone and where the struggle for life is reduced to its primordial mechanism, this unjust law is openly in force, is recognized by all. With the adaptable, the strong and astute individuals, even the leaders

willingly kept contact... But with the mussulman, the men in decay, it is not even worth speaking, because one knows already that they will complain and will speak about what they used to eat at home... And in any case, one knows that they are only here on a visit, that in a few weeks nothing will remain of them, but a handful of ashes in some nearby field and a crossed out number on a register."²⁷

At Treblinka, the rebellion occurred on August 23, 1942. The reason was that the old prisoners learned that no struggle could prevent death any longer, that they were all destined to be killed once their work assignment were completed; rebellion became the only alternative. Maintained as a permanent slave labor force, several hundred Jews selected from among arriving trainloads had spent many months servicing the machinery of death. Gossip picked up from the guards, together with a new work pattern designed to destroy all evidence of the camp's existence, made it plain that sooner or later Treblinka was to be closed down and that they themselves would also be eliminated. A coordinated plan was developed to attack individual officers and guard posts with homemade weapons. After a core group of prisoners began the revolt, others joined in and succeeded in forcing several openings, in the perimeter of the camp. Enough guards remained in action, however, to shoot down the majority of escaping prisoners. Of the 150 to 200 who got out of the camp, only twelve ultimately survived.²⁸

The Sobibor extermination camp had a work force of approximately 600 prisoners, including a sizable number who had been captured while serving in the Soviet Army. In concert with Polish Jews imprisoned for a much longer period, the Russian Jewish soldiers organized an uprising essentially similar to the one in Treblinka. Using hatchets and knives fashioned from their work tools, they killed several guards, took their guns,

and used them to attack the main gate. According to the testimony of the Soviet Jewish leader of the rebellion, the breakout itself was a success, but many of the prisoners were killed by mines and gunfire as they ran across to reach shelter in the nearby forest. Here various Russian, Polish, and West European Jews split into small groups, some heading east toward Russia while others moved toward more familiar areas of Poland. Although no exact count has been made of the number of survivors, it is estimated that at least 60 men and women were able to link up to Soviet partisan groups.²⁹

The third major revolt occurred at Auschwitz on October 6, 1944. It was the work of Jews assigned to the crematorium, some of whom had been active in the Greek resistance prior to being deported, including three former officers of the Greek Army. Others were Slovak and Polish Jews, and there were some Soviet prisoners of War. All the crematoria workers knew they were doomed because it was common knowledge that these prisoners were periodically killed as a matter of SS policy. In order to slow down the mass killing, the group resolved to blow up the body-disposal ovens. Acting with remarkable skill, they accumulated guns and dynamite and were able to destroy one of the four ovens. Others working at the crematorium joined the action, but the response of the SS was very swift; within two hours the rebellion was crushed and all were killed except for a few wounded who were hanged in front of the prisoners.³⁰

Various Conditions for Resistance

The evidence clearly does not support charges of Jewish passivity. What is clear that only certain social and political conditions permit the development of partisan organizations and that these conditions rarely

existed for Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.³¹

It is sometimes held that specifically Jewish resistance only occurred in Eastern Europe, most particularly in Poland and in the Soviet Union. While Jews were active in resistance groups elsewhere, they participated, it is claimed, in a non-sectarian, nationalist fashion, much as any other citizen.³² Evidence shows, however, that Jews in the West often conducted resistance in a deliberately obscure fashion. In France, for example, a Jewish poet organized a fighting group supported with Zionist funds.³³ Consisting mainly of young people recruited from the prewar Jewish Scout organization, this underground group eventually fought with other French Maquisards in the South, but its Jewish identity was not widely known. The Jewish scouts themselves operated a clandestine escape and evasion network under the pretense of working with the German-sponsored French Jewish Council. These scouts helped to rescue more than 4,000 persons from deportation.³⁴ Jews played a disproportionately large role in French national resistance organizations, often assuming gentile names in order to avoid reprisals against their families.³⁵ Jews were part of resistance in Italy, Holland, and other occupied countries; Greece, for instance, had Jewish escape and fighting groups.³⁶

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

The most dramatic resistance and rebellion was in the Warsaw Ghetto. The Jewish armed resistance, when it came, did not spring from a sudden impulse; it was not an act of personal courage on the part of a few individuals; it was the culmination of Jewish defiance, defiance that had existed from the

advent of the ghetto.³⁷

The Germans had decided to create a ghetto in Warsaw as early as November 1939. The plan was implemented on October 16, 1940 when the ghetto was established and on November 15, the gates of the ghetto were closed.³⁸ The Jews of Warsaw, along with refugees from other Polish cities- a total almost a half a million men, women, and children- were squeezed into an area of approximately 100 square city blocks (about a thousand acres).³⁹ The ghetto inhabitants were forced to live on 6 1/2 ounces of bread a day, about 8 ounces of sugar a month, 2.2 lbs. jam and 1.1 lbs. honey, etc.⁴⁰ It was calculated that the official supplies did not cover even 10 percent of normal requirements. If one had wanted really to restrict oneself to the official rations, then the entire population of the ghetto would have had to die of hunger in very short time.

The Warsaw Jews suffered from severe food shortages, intense overcrowding, poorly heated, dilapidated housing, poor sanitation and rampant disease. They had little or no access to weapons, no mobility, and when if they did escape, no place of refuge. Furthermore, they lived daily with physical and psychological torture designed to bring them to breaking point. There were random humiliations and beatings in the streets by the German occupiers and their Polish sympathizers, and random selection for forced labor for the Germans. Any Jew who stood up to a German directly was shot on spot. Under these conditions, the definition of resistance must include anything that gave hope or saved lives.

Thus the Yiddish Cultural Organization and Freedom Youth Group organized cultural events in the ghetto : Yiddish theater, concerts, ballets, lectures, a children's choir, and active symphony orchestra.⁴¹

Children had their own way resisting, Youth organization tried to grow vegetables on tiny patches of land where houses had been burned down.

The official food ration could not sustain life, so hundreds of children between the ages of four and fourteen became smugglers, facing certain death if they were caught. They became the ghetto's most important citizens, its heroes.⁴² Hundred of teenagers and young men and women organized underground organizations which ran educational and leadership training seminars. The groups published newspapers exhorting hope and faith in a better future and circulated them throughout the ghetto.

The Jews of Warsaw tried to hold on to hope, but the grim reality of the ghetto life began to overshadow what optimism still existed. In 1941 alone, typhus struck down thousands, and 11,000 more died of hunger.⁴³ By the beginning of 1942, reports and rumors of atrocities and mass killings of Jews began to reach the ghetto. Debates now centered on how the news should be interpreted: Was it true? Were the murders, perhaps, reprisals rather than genocide? Could the same thing happen in Warsaw? Throughout the ghetto, young people, the first to believe the reports were authentic, met and argued about the merits and possibilities of active, armed resistance.⁴⁴

The Germans assured the Judenrat that the deportations from the Warsaw ghetto would be limited. This led to divided opinions as to the benefits of the active resistance. But when the deportations continued, the head of the Judenrat, Adam Czerniakow, committed suicide. His suicide had no effect on the speed or size of the deportations. Within few weeks more than 300,000 Jews were forcibly transported to Treblinka and other death camps.⁴⁵

On July 28, 1942, young men and women formed the ZOB, the Jewish Fighting Organization. It was led by a young man, Mordecai Anielewicz. The ZOB had two revolvers, which were used to train others in the use of weapons. The group used young women as couriers to the Polish underground outside the ghetto; the women attempted to obtain guns and

dynamite.

In the fall of 1942, the mood of those who remained after the massive deportations was described by the historian Emanuel Ringelblum: "... Most of the populace is set on resistance... They want the enemy to pay dearly for their lives. They will fling themselves at them with knives, staves, coal gas, They will permit no more blockades. They will not allow to be seized in the streets. for they know that work camp means death camp these days... Naturally there will only be a resistance if it is organized, and if the enemy does not move like lightning..."⁴⁶

By the end of 1942, Warsaw's Jews had begun constructing elaborate underground hideouts and bunkers throughout the ghetto, complete with sewerage and ventilation systems ; some bunkers even had running water, electricity, and radios. All were stocked with enough food for weeks of occupancy.

In December 1942, after insistent requests for arms were made to Polish AK, Home Army, the ZOB received 10 revolvers, some of which were unusable, and a limited amount of ammunition. The organization was subsequently sent another " 10 revolvers, instruction for sabotage action, a formula for the production of bottle firebombs, and instruction in military operations."⁴⁷ The ZOB had also obtained a small number of guns smuggled into the ghetto by the couriers. With this modest arsenal, the organization issued a call for resistance against what its members expected would be the final attempts by the Germans to liquidate the ghetto. The ZOB issued a call that "...not even one Jew must go to train. People who cannot resist actively must offer passive resistance, that is, by hiding... Now our slogan must be: Let everyone be ready to die like a man."⁴⁸

With 143 revolvers, one machine pistol and seven rounds of ammunition per weapon, the Jewish Fighters' Organization fought back

when the Nazis suddenly surrounded the ghetto on January 18, 1943 and began the Aktion.

The ZOB suffered heavy losses in the four-day, often face-to-face battle, and five to six thousand Jews were taken. But the young fighters killed 20 Germans, wounded some 30 more,⁴⁹ and electrified the ghetto with their courage.

Many ghetto residents were now eager to join the fighting force, but were thwarted by the scarcity of arms. The ghetto fighters believed it was their resistance which prevented the final liquidation. But in fact, the SS had planned the January Aktion as a limited, rather than final, deportation ; their quota had been 8,000 Jews.⁵⁰

The 60,000 Jews who remained in Warsaw worked frenziedly to prepare for a ghetto-wide uprising, an undertaking without precedent. Resistance movements are virtually always adjunct of military forces. They are not self-sufficient, they do not procure their own weapons, and they are able to draw upon outside political, economic and social resources. The Warsaw Ghetto resistance movement had little in common with the typical resistance movement. ZOB members were compelled by necessity to draw from each other, and from non-fighting ghetto residents, approval, support, strength, and courage.

Many resistance fighters saw the January uprising as proof that more armed resistance might be able to force the Germans to stop the deportations. On the streets, mines were laid and thoroughly camouflaged. Fortified positions were prepared on the rooftops and in the attics. The ghetto was divided into fighting sectors and a unit of fighters assigned to each ; a battle plan was drawn up. The bunkers were readied and equipped for long stays. Everyone had a place of refuge. Couriers smuggled in dynamite. The fighters made hand grenades and Molotov cocktails, trained intensively, and

petitioned the AK for more arms and ammunition. They appealed to the free world telling their story and asking for aid and rescue. But their appeals were to no avail.

Throughout February and March of 1943, the Germans tried to encourage those still working in the German-run ghetto factories to accept voluntary "resettlement." They promised safe and secure future to all volunteers. But the workers, encouraged by the ZOB, resisted.

The Germans, alarmed that the ghetto's resistance would inspire similar resistance in other ghettos and among the Poles as well, planned to liquidate the ghetto through a three-day-mass deportation. At 2:00 a.m. Monday, April 19, 1943, SS forces surrounded the ghetto.⁵¹ In 15 minutes the resistance was mobilized. At 6:00 a.m., when more than 2,000 SS troops entered the ghetto with tanks, rapid-fire guns, and trailer-loads of ammunition, Jewish civilians were safely in hiding, and 750 young ghetto fighters were ready. They "attacked the entering the German columns. With incendiary bottles... they blew up German tanks and German troops...[and] prevented relief troops from entering the ghetto. By 5:00 p.m. the Germans, surprised and shocked by Jewish resistance, withdrew from the ghetto, having lost some 200 dead and wounded."⁵²

The next day the Germans, under the command of General Jurgen Stroop, demanded that the ZOB lay down its arms. The following response is described by Marek Edelman, a commander of a fighting unit: "...the Germans again in closed formation, arrived at the Brushmakers' Gate. They did not suspect that at that very moment an observer picked up an electric plug. A German factory guard walked toward the Gate, wishing to open it. At precisely the same moment the plug was placed in the socket and a mine which had awaited the Germans for a long time, exploded under the SS men's feet. More than one hundred SS men were killed in the explosion. The rest,

fired on by partisans, withdrew." ⁵³

The Germans brought in tanks and field artillery. They demanded that the Jews lay down their arms. Their demand was met with fierce resistance from the ZOB. The Germans appealed to noncombatant Jews in hiding to come out voluntarily as a way of saving themselves. But the " civilians too were part of the uprising, and they ignored the German orders. " Every house remained a hostile fortress." ⁵⁴

To force the Jews out of hiding, the Germans cut off electricity, gas, and water and set fire to an entire block of the Jewish quarter. " The flames cling to our clothes, which now start smoldering. The pavement melts under our feet. Our soles begin to burn. One after another we stagger through the conflagration. From house to house, from courtyard to courtyard.. with burning rafters continually falling on us, we finally reach the end of the area under fire. We feel lucky just to stand there, to be out of the inferno" ⁵⁵ is the description of a fighter.

On April 22, the Germans continued to attack with massive military power and continued block-to-block burning of the ghetto. The ZOB had no defense against the fire, as General Stroop's reports indicates: "During the night, the fires we had started earlier forced the Jews to appear in front of the housing blocks to escape from the flames in any way they could... Masses of burning Jews- entire families- jumped from windows or tried to lower themselves using tied-together bed sheets, etc. Measures had been taken to liquidate these as well as others Jews immediately. Five thousand and three hundred Jews were apprehended for transfer and transported onward." ⁵⁶

Thousands perished in flames ; thousands died from the dense black smoke and burning heat. The Germans used listening devices and police dogs to discover underground shelters; when the shelters were located, they attacked them with flamethrowers. Those who emerged were marched to

waiting trains.

On the fifth day of the uprising, Mordecai Anielewicz, the young commander of the uprising, sent a message to his vice commander : "It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear, what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. . I feel that great things are happening and what we dared to do is of great, enormous importance.

Peace go with you, my dear friend! Perhaps we may still meet again ! The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defense in the ghetto will have been a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent , heroic fighting of Jewish men of battle."⁵⁷

No outside help came from Poles and from anybody else. About 1,000 poorly equipped Jewish fighters still remained alive in what was now a sea of fire ; they battled 5,000 Germans.

A final message from the ghetto was released on April 26 : "We are now in the 8th day of our fight to the death... The Germans have suffered heavy losses..[but] the number of Jewish losses is enormous. Our day are numbered.. We have rejected the German ultimatum calling upon us to capitulate. Since we see our end drawing near we beg you : Do not forget !"⁵⁸

On May 16 the uprising was over. General Stroop announced : "The former Jewish quarter of Warsaw is no more. The grand operation was terminated at 20:15 hour when the Warsaw Synagogue was blown up... The total number of Jews apprehended and destroyed according to record is 50,065."⁵⁹

But hundreds of Jews remained in the ghetto ruins, searching at night, for food and water and one another. Some eventually escaped the ghetto with the help of the Polish underground. A handful remained in their bunkers until the Polish underground staged its own revolt in Warsaw in August '44.

The uprising in the Warsaw ghetto lasted longer than the resistance to German invasion of Poland in September 1939. It inspired Jews in the ghettos of Bialystok, Vilna, Cracow, Lvov, and others scattered across Poland, to revolt; it inspired partisans in the forests to continue their struggle. The rebellion was the first armed uprising in Nazi-occupied Europe by an urban population, and it was unique in that a fighting force worked closely with unarmed men and women for a common cause.

The world, present and future generations, must know the true story of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. So that never will the question be heard, "Why did they go like sheep to the slaughter?."

Rescue Efforts and Failures

Despite resistance to accepting the fact that the Nazis were systematically murdering Jews and planning to eliminate them physically from Europe, incontrovertible evidence, portions of which had been streaming in throughout 1942 and earlier in the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres, forced the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union to make a solemn protest of December 17, 1942, against the German government's intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe, "and condemned in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold blooded extermination."⁶⁰ The British House of Commons even stood in silence for two minutes after the declaration was read by Anthony Eden.⁶¹ This was the first public, official acknowledgment of Nazi genocidal plans by the Allies. They pledged retribution and punishment of the perpetrators, but there was no rescue effort to save those still alive.

Fundamentally, any strategy of rescue had to come from the Allies, singly or collectively, but they never considered the rescue of Jews to be a major or incidental wartime objective. There were, however, numerous rescue schemes, but the results were meager, or, more often, non-existent.⁶²

The Fallacy of "Resettlement" Plans

Thousands of European Jews went to their deaths believing until the last moment that they were being resettled. How did the term "resettlement", a rather benevolent word with the connotation of renewal, become a code word for implementation of the Final Solution? At least part of the answer lies in the fact that between 1938 and the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Nazi authorities considered making the Reich *judenrein* by means of resettlement, rather than by mass murder.⁶³ Best known are the plans for Jewish reservations in Madagascar and Lublin. These schemes by the Nazis turned out to be a precursor to liquidation, or, as occurred in many instances, merely another form of the Final Solution. "There is no question of a Jewish state" warned Alfred Rosenberg in reference to the Madagascar project, "but only of a Jewish reservation."⁶⁴

The term "resettlement" was also used extensively by the Allies. One of the solutions considered during the refugee crisis was the organization of agricultural communities in unused lands. Such schemes called for the establishment of settlements which ranged in size from the individual hundreds to new nations-states involving millions. An examination of the James G. MacDonald papers at Columbia University confirms that a large number of the rescue schemes during the Holocaust were based on resettlement.⁶⁵ Dozens of plans were brought to the Administration and

the refugee advocates on the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees (PACPR), which acted on its behalf.⁶⁶ Some of the major "resettlement" schemes were resettlement in Alaska, Mindanao, British Guiana, Santo Domingo, North and Central Africa, and various Latin American countries. None of these schemes had any success.

No Real Concern for Saving Jews Among the Allies

Throughout the crucial years 1942-43, there was deliberate obstruction, evasion, and indifference on the part of British and American bureaucrats and policy makers. The Soviet Union was not all concerned with specifically saving Jewish lives. The American Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau, experienced at first hand the diplomatic inertia that blocked rescue. "We knew in Washington" he wrote, "from August 1942 on, that the Nazis were planning to exterminate all the Jews of Europe. Yet for nearly 18 months, the State Department did practically nothing. Officials dodged their grim responsibility, procrastinated when concrete rescue schemes were placed before them, and even suppressed information in order to prevent an outraged public opinion from forcing their hand."⁶⁷ The State Department doomed a Swedish offer to negotiate with the Germans for the release of 20,000 children from Europe.⁶⁸ The British Foreign Office declared: "The Foreign Office is concerned with the difficulty of disposing of any considerable number of Jews should they be released from enemy territory."⁶⁹

Hostile British

Attitudes toward

Rescue of Jews

The British had not only blocked emigration and flight to Palestine, but, after 1940, classified Jews in Nazi-occupied countries as enemy aliens.⁷⁰ If any were able to flee Europe and go to Britain, they were interned as such.

In May 1943, Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary, discussed the possible rescue of 60,000 to 70,000 Bulgarian Jews with Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State. Eden declared that "the whole problem of the Jews is very difficult and that we should move very cautiously about offering to take all Jews out of a country like Bulgaria. If we do that, then the Jews of the world will be wanting us to make similar offers in Poland/ Germany."⁷¹ He then added that "Hitler might take us up on any such offer" and there simply were not enough ships.⁷² Yet ten days after the meeting, the British announced plans to take 21,000 non-Jewish refugees to East Africa, among the 100,000 non-Jewish refugees moved to the Middle East and Africa during the war. Over a million Italian and German prisoners of war were also put on ships to the United States.⁷³

Silence of the Pope;

Courageous Voice

of Metropolitan Stephan

Jews in the ghettos and camps clung to the hope for salvation from the

Allies. Jews also hoped for and expected help from institutions of moral statute and humanity as the Vatican and International Red Cross, but those hopes, too, were bitterly thwarted.

Nearly 80 percent of the German invaded Europe owed religious allegiance to the Vatican, but this great institution remained silent through the Holocaust. The Vatican, with the exception of Slovakia, did not condemn the mass murder of Jews nor the murderers. Not even the chief architects of mass murder: Hitler, Himmler, and Heydrich - all Catholics - were excommunicated, nor were they threatened with excommunication. Nor was the myth of resettlement ever publicly exposed, although the Vatican knew what the deportation meant.⁷⁴

In contrast to the Pope, The Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople wrote all his bishops in the Balkans and in Central Europe urging them to help Jews and to announce in their churches that concealing Jews was a sacred duty.⁷⁵

The Failure of the International Red Cross Committee

Another great institution from which Jews hoped for aid also failed them. This was the International Committee of the Red Cross, which was the prisoner of old international conventions when these were meaningless and destructive. Its function has been to preserve some elements of civilized conduct in wartime and to relieve the suffering of prisoners and other victims of war. When victims were Jews, the Red Cross was shackled or shackled itself with outmoded terms.⁷⁶ It admitted that Nazism had condemned Jews to persecution and systematic extermination, but being

neither prisoners of war nor civilian internees, they formed a separate category, without benefit of any convention. They were classified as detainees, which gave them a penal status. The strongest and most detailed condemnation of the International Committee of the Red Cross can be found in Facing the Holocaust in Budapest- The International Red Cross Committee of the Red Cross and the Jews in Hungary, 1943- 1945 by Arie Ben-Tov.⁷⁷

Courageous Governments and People in Rescue of Jews

There were some courageous governments and people whose deed in rescuing Jews should be recorded.

Foremost among them is Denmark. The German army invaded Denmark in 1940. For two years the Germans did not take stringent actions against the Jews because of the Danes' persistent resistance against Nazi anti-Jewish measures. It is reported that King Christian X, in a conversation with a German official who used the phrase "Jewish problem", replied, "There is no Jewish problem in this country. There is only my people."⁷⁸ It is also told that when German officials reproached King Christian for his "negligence in resolving the Jewish problem", he answered, "Gentlemen, since we have never considered ourselves inferior to the Jew, we have no such a problem here."⁷⁹ On another occasion, King Christian announced, "If the Germans want to introduce the yellow star in Denmark, I and my whole family will wear it as a sign of highest distinction."⁸⁰ When in August 1943 a Nazi order was issued to deport all Jews, the Danish population mobilized all its resources to rescue the Jews. They succeeded in "smuggling" some 7,000 Jews to neutral, unoccupied Sweden.⁸¹ No other occupied country has achieved the distinction of rescuing the major part of its Jewish population

like Denmark.

Even more exceptional than the rescue from Denmark was the fate of the Jews in Finland.⁸² The Jewish community there was a small one, numbering close to two thousand people during the war, including about three hundred refugees who had escaped from Germany and Austria and a few who had come from Denmark and Norway after those countries fell to the Germans. The Finnish Constitution accorded the Jews full equality, and the small Jewish community developed its own lively cultural life..

In the Winter War against the Soviet Union, Jews served in the Finnish army alongside the country's other citizens. Jews retained their equal status even after Finland joined Germany in its campaign against Russia in 1941, for the Finns regarded the fighting against Russia as an extension of their struggle against Soviet aggression, not as an expression of support for Germany's ideology or political system. They did not indulge in anti-Semitism, in deportations and extermination, and their posture on this issue was clearly expressed in the state's free press. What is more significant, since Jews served in the Finnish army in this war, as well, the Germans found themselves in a situation in which Jewish officers and enlisted men were fighting as their comrades-in-arm.⁸³

Hitler and the leaders of German regime found this situation strange and in the summer of 1942 attempts were made to lure Finland into the embrace of the New Order of Europe- and into the implementation of the "Final Solution."⁸⁴ Visiting Finland, Himmler tried to promote the extermination plan among the Finns. He was told in no uncertain terms that there was no Jewish problem in Finland.⁸⁵

On September 19, 1944, an armistice agreement was signed between Finland and the Soviet Union.⁸⁶ Two months later the Central Committee of the Jewish Communities in Finland published a memorandum stressing the

full equality that the Jewish citizens of Finland had enjoyed during the war, both in the army, in which some 20 percent of the Jewish community had served, and in civilian life.⁸⁷

The third country in which concerted activity to rescue Jews proved successful was Bulgaria. Close to fifty thousand Jews composed 0.8 percent of the population of Bulgaria. Half of them lived in the capital.⁸⁸ The community was recognized as a national minority and Jews enjoyed autonomy in their internal life.

In March 1941 Bulgaria joined the Axis powers and the German army, entering the country, proceeded to invade Greece and Yugoslavia. After the conquest of Yugoslavia and Greece, Bulgaria received the control of part of southern and eastern Macedonia as well as Greek Thrace. Bulgaria did not play major role in the military operations in the Balkans. Of even greater importance was the fact that it not only refrained from declaring war on the Soviet Union but continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Moscow.⁸⁹ Bulgaria formally maintained the parliamentary format of its regime, and even though the opposition parties may not have had any real influence on the dictatorial rule of Czar Boris II and his government, nevertheless, they were allowed to air their views and enjoyed public support- a factor that the government had to take into account. There was a Communist underground, whose arm in the Soviet Union constantly warned against the persecution of Jews. Toward the end of the summer of 1940, when the pro-Nazi government decided to pass anti-Jewish legislation- entitled the Defense of the Nation- a debate arose in the parliament as well among the public at large. A broad sector publicly protested the passage of discriminatory legislation against the Jews.⁹⁰ The debate continued for months, during which the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian church sent a letter of protest to the prime minister, with a copy to the chairman of the parliament, proposing that rather than devote

itself to passing special laws against the Jews, the government should be taking meaningful steps to counter the real danger facing the Bulgarian people.⁹¹ Thus, it was not until the second half of January 1941 that the government managed to get the law passed and Czar Boris signed it on February 15.⁹²

Later on the Commissariat for the Jewish problem was established in Bulgaria. Its mandate was twofold; to preside over the confiscation of Jewish property and to lay the groundwork for deporting Jews to the East by passing laws and regulations modeled on the German precedents. The head of the Commissariat, Alexander Belev, was sent to Germany for a few months to study the matter.⁹³ Yet in Bulgaria there was a difference between passing laws and enforcing them, which was particularly obvious in the case of the regulations requiring the Jews to wear a yellow badge. The government agreed to supply the badge, but by October 1942 it had provided only 20 percent of the required number, claiming that it was technically impossible to distribute any more.

In 1943 the Jewish population of Greater Bulgaria numbered 63,403 people.⁹⁴ 18 percent of the population, or 11,363 from Macedonia and other annexed territories were deported. One of the Bulgarian government's primary objectives in passing the anti-Jewish legislation was to get hold of the Jewish property, even though this was not particularly extensive. The Bulgarian Writers' Association, various underground parties, a segment of the population, and, most of all, the Holy Synod, under the leadership of the Metropolitan Stefan, constantly raised their voices in support of Jews and against their deportation. A petition of the Holy Synod to the Government on April 2, 1943 demanded that "Christians of Jewish origin and *Jews in general* should not be denied their elementary rights as human beings and citizens or their right to live in the country and work for a decent human

existence."⁹⁵ Thus the result of the Government's actions was that the Jews were pauperized- but they survived.

In the rescue of the Jews of Denmark, Finland, and Bulgaria humanitarian motives played a major role. However, there were also political and strategic circumstances that reinforced the arguments of those who wanted to save the Jews and served as the background to rescue activities. Sweden's readiness to establish clandestine ties with Denmark and take in the Danish Jews was to a large extent in response to the turn in the tide of the war. The same can be said of the Bulgarian czar's refusal to abandon his citizens to the Germans. However, two phenomenon are common to all three countries in which the rescue of Jews were largely successful. The first is that authoritative information on the planned deportation came from the side of the perpetrators: in Denmark, from the Germans stationed there, and in Finland, from the police. The second was that in all three cases, the deportation was foiled at the very last moment- in response to an attempt to effect it in a surprise, lighting move. The authoritative source of the information left no question about acknowledgment, which, in turn, facilitated a quick response that averted tragedy.

Rescue in Croatia

by Italian Army Officers

Among rescuers mentioning should also be made of the Italian Army officers who saved Croatian Jews in the Italian Sector of the of the Yugoslavian occupation. In the spring of 1942, when the Croatian Guards-*Ustasa*- intensified the persecution of the Jews throughout the area of the Croatian state, the officers and soldiers of the Italian Army who were stationed there understood that it was their obligation to protect the

residents, and first and foremost the persecuted minorities; quite naturally, the Jews- both the local ones and the refugees-were also included.⁹⁶

The initial steps to be taken to save the Jews were part of the general responsibility of the Italian army in the region and a continuation of its activities to save the Serbian population. There is no doubt, however, that the Italians devoted special attention to the rescue of the Jews, and for them it assumed political and moral significance far beyond their general interest in maintaining order in the region.

The Italians realized the political aspects of the problem in the spring of 1942, when the Croatian-German agreement to deport all the Jews of Croatia became known. The fact that the agreement had been signed without their knowledge, by a state which, it had been previously agreed, would be under their exclusive sphere of influence, was a severe blow to the status and prestige of the Italian Army. Moreover, according to the terms of the agreement, it was to include the Jews living in the area of Italian occupation as well.⁹⁷ From that time on, the opinion became widespread among various Italian political and military officials that the extradition of the Jews to the Croats would be tantamount to a surrender to German orders and, would for the peoples of the region, constitute a public admission of the weakness of the Italian Army.⁹⁸

The Italian rescue has to be extended into many other areas : the human treatment of Jewish refugees in Italian camps, especially in Ferramonti. Ferramonti was a concentration camp, but there was no similarity between it and the infamous Nazi camps. The internees were granted considerable autonomy, a secondary school, three synagogues, and cultural activities, and Jewish aid organizations were allowed to send food and other necessities to the internees. The population of the surrounding countryside of Calabria showed strong solidarity with the imprisoned

refugees despite Fascist anti-Jewish propaganda;⁹⁹ they participated in the rescue of about forty children, most of whose parents had been murdered. The children were in Yugoslavia, on their way to Palestine, when the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia and the subsequent establishment of the Croatian ~~Ustasa~~ state forced them to seek safety in the Italian occupied zone of Slovenia. The children were first rescued by the Italian Army and later transferred to Nonantola near Modena. The local population and priests were successful in hiding all of them after the German occupation in 1943, and the group eventually found safety in Switzerland.¹⁰⁰

Jewish losses in Italy amount approximately fifteen percent of the Italian Jewish population, which is among the top survival rates of Jews in German-occupied countries. The attitude of the people of Italy toward the Jews of Italy was major and admirable factor in this high survival rate.

"Righteous Among the Nations"

"Righteous Among the Nations" is the title for non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. It comes from a Hebrew phrase, *hasidei umot haolam*, used by the rabbis of the Talmud who stated that "The righteous among the nations of the world have a place in the world to come." The Israeli parliament passed *The Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law* in 1953, and charged the Yad Vashem Remembrance Authority with perpetuating and establishing a memorial to "the Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives so save Jews."¹⁰¹

The perpetuation of events and uprising of the Holocaust would be incomplete without the inspiring chapters - unique point of light- recorded by individuals within the nations under Nazi rule, whose conscience did not

let them stand aside and accept with indifference the fate of the Jews.

The Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Law (1953) did not provide an exact definition of who was worthy of the title "Righteous Among the Nations." It merely mentioned "the highminded Gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews," without defining who they were. During the years certain criteria were established to be considered worthy of the title: extending help in saving life ; endangering one's own life ; absence of reward, monetary or otherwise ; and similar considerations, which make the rescuer's deeds stand out above and beyond what can be termed ordinary help, which is of course also praiseworthy.¹⁰²

The number of Holocaust survivors, saved thanks to the assistance given by citizens of European countries under the Nazi rule, is not known.¹⁰³ Taking into consideration an unknown number of rescue acts about which information is not available, together with those recognized by the committee, the number of "Righteous Among the Nations" reaches perhaps ten thousand or twenty thousand.¹⁰⁴ Everyone recognized as a "Righteous Among the Nations" is entitled to plant a tree in his/her name along the avenue on Yad Vashem Memorial Hill in Jerusalem.

By early 1989 about eight thousand "Righteous Among the Nations" have been recognized.¹⁰⁵ Each one was awarded a certificate of honor and a medal engraved with his or her own name and the Talmudic maxim "He who saves one life is considered as having saved the whole world."¹⁰⁶

The stories of rescue and self-sacrifice will teach future generations to understand the significance of the term "humanity".

What were the Acts
of "Righteous
Among the Nations"?

The majority of rescues involved concealment in the home or yard of the rescuer, most often by building a bunker within a house or a warehouse ; those in hiding had to remain there for weeks, months, and even years, usually without seeing the light of day. The food supply was a special problem in the wartime conditions of scarcity, and at times the need rescuer shared a tip of a slice of bread with the people he/she was concealing. This kind of rescue was perhaps the most dangerous, because of the long period of concealment, the frequent searches for people in hiding, and, at times, denunciation by collaborators with the Germans. Others found way to rescue by providing forged papers that allowed a Jew to live as a non-Jew outside the ghetto or camp, or by helping to smuggle Jews over the border to another area or country(such as unoccupied France, Spain ,Portugal, and Switzerland.) One teenage girl working in a munitions factory deprived herself of a slice of bread every day, month after month, giving it to the Jewish prisoner working with her. 107

For the most part the "Righteous Among the Nations " worked as individuals, each one guided by the dictates of his conscience, out of purely human motives, and at times from profound religious convictions. In several cases , as in Norway and The Netherlands, and a to a certain degree in France and in Belgium. the anti-Nazi underground also helped persecuted Jews in different ways, mainly by finding hiding places.

Collective

Rescue Efforts

A unique and unusual instance of collective rescue activity took place in the Dutch village of Nieuwlande. In 1942 and 1943 the village inhabitants, resolved that every household would hide one Jewish family or at least one

Jew. Given the collective nature of the activity, the danger to the village was small ; there was no fear of denunciation since all the village dwellers were partners to the "crime." All 117 inhabitants of that village were recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations."¹⁰⁸ The most known case of collective rescue is that of the French town of Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon in the Haute-Lioure area of Southern France. The town served as a focal point for the sheltering of thousands of Jews during most of the Nazi occupation.¹⁰⁹ The population of the town and many surrounding villages were French Protestants , descendants of Huguenots who were persecuted by the Catholic Church.¹¹⁰ The citizens of Chambon were outraged by the reports of Jewish arrests and deportations and responded to the call of Pastor Andre Trocme to extend aid to fleeing Jews and sheltered them in private homes and outlying farmsteads, as well as public institutions in Le Chambon and nearby localities.¹¹¹ Refugees were not a novelty in Chambon history, neither concealment of refugees. Some of hideouts chosen had been used three hundred years before by the Huguenots. The whole countryside was alerted, and scarcely a farmer refused to take in a refugee should this become necessary.¹¹² Trocme always responded to call to hide Jews in danger of detection by the German police, even if this jeopardized not only his own life but those of his wife and children and members of his own community. Refugee Jews were housed in public institutions and children's homes and with local townsmen and farmers, for various periods of time. With the help of others, such as Pastor Edouard Theis, director of the College Cevenol, some were taken on dangerous treks through French towns and villages under assumed French names to the Swiss frontier. They were superstitiously smuggled across it and into the waiting hands of other Protestant supporters on the Swiss side (the Swiss authorities invariably drove Jews back across the

border and therefore contact with them had to be avoided.)¹¹³ It is estimated that some three thousand to five thousand Jews found shelter in Chambon and its environment at one time or another between 1941 and 1944.¹¹⁴

Some individuals also developed broad rescue networks, saving many endangered Jews. The bold enterprize of Raul Wallenberg in Hungary is one of the most famous ; his passion for rescue was boundless.

Raul Wallenberg

" The Angel of Rescue "

In July 1944, upon the initiative of Jewish organizations, Raul Wallenberg, a Swedish aristocrat, was sent to Budapest to serve as an attache of the Swedish Embassy. His main goals , however, was to work together with the War Refugee Board and Jewish institutions for the rescue of Hungarian Jewry. By that time about 300,000 Hungarian Jews had been already deported to Auschwitz.¹¹⁵ Wallenberg's first step was to print Swedish certificates of protection, which he distributed to anyone connected in any way whatsoever with Sweden, and to extend protection of the Swedish Government to all those who received the certificates. When he found out that the local authorities were honoring those documents for the time being, he printed more of them and expanded the operation by purchasing 32 houses and four apartments which he converted into "safe houses" where he housed the new Swedish citizens including 8000 children.¹¹⁶ What is more, Wallenberg issued passports wholesale. Theoretically, these papers indicated that the holders were about to be admitted to the issuing countries ; passport holders were deemed under the protection of the issuing countries and therefore exempt from deportations. It worked in many cases but not always...¹¹⁷ Wallenberg employed nearly 400 workers, established soup

kitchens and hospitals, and provided vital services. He endangered his diplomatic status, but this did not perturb him. He worked without respite, devoting his inexhaustible energy to rescue. During the street riots, when the "Arrow Cross" [Hungarian Nazi Party] seized power Wallenberg dashed from house to house to save Jews from death, no longer checking whether those he saved had any connection with Sweden. When ten of thousands of Jews were expelled from Budapest in November 1944, and on the "death march" to the Austrian border- which meant having to walk 150 miles in snow and cold- Wallenberg followed the Jews with trucks and distributed food, warm clothing, and shoes. Moreover, he took everyone he could possibly remove from transport back to Budapest. At times, a meaningless scrap of paper sufficed to pull someone out of the column.¹¹⁸

Wallenberg deeds proved to be contagious. Thus the Swiss, Spanish, Portugese representatives extended protection to a number of Jews whose ancestors had been expelled from their countries and the Vatican representative also assisted Jews, but on a far more limited scale than Wallenberg's operation. In all the neutral embassies saved about 20,000 Jews. Wallenberg is credited with saving between 100,000 to 120,000 Hungarian Jews.¹¹⁹

On January 17, 1945, three and half weeks after the Russians entered Budapest on Christmas eve, Wallenberg, and his driver, Wilmos Langfelder, and two Russian officers set out for Debrecen, some 120 miles east of Budapest. Wallenberg wanted to get the Russians' help in dealing with the Arrow Cross gangs. Neither he nor his driver ever returned.¹²⁰

The mystery of Wallenberg' fate after war in Russian hands was never solved. Raul Wallenberg, an angel of life, was given Honorary Citizenship of the United Sates and Israel.

Dr. Adelaine Hautval

" The Saint "

Dr. Adelaine Hautval was a courageous French doctor who protested the treatment of the Jews by the Gestapo in France and ultimately was sent to Auschwitz. Here she took care of the women prisoners in her block; the female prisoners called her " the saint. " She did not tell about the epidemics of typhus in her block to save Jewish lives. She refused to participate in the horrible experimentations on women in Auschwitz by the butchers Dr. Agrad and Dr. Wirth. She also refused to administer anaesthesia or perform sterilization. Dr. Hautval did her best to protect the Jewish women prisoners and in her capacity as a doctor she was truly " the angel in white. " ¹²¹

Elisebeth Abegg

The Rescuer in Berlin

The " Righteous Among the Nations " were found of helping Jews even in the nerve center of the Nazi regime. Thus for example, Mrs. Elisebeth Abegg helped a large number of Jews in Berlin during the years 1942-1944. Her home was open to persecuted Jews and whoever received her address found help and succor. Thanks to Mrs. Abegg's effort 25 Jewish children were hidden by her during the most difficult period of the war. ¹²² It is superfluous to point out to what extent she endangered herself. Suffice is to say that her activities were carried out in Berlin where not only the Gestapo was on the lookout, but even the concierge of her house constituted a threat. Mrs. Abegg and other " Righteous Among the Nations " viewed helping the persecuted and the needy as their main obligation. Thus the

danger they took upon themselves came from the awareness that it was their duty to act as they did.

George Ferdinand Duckwitz,
the Nazi Attache in Denmark

Among the "Righteous Among the Nations" there is a prominent place for George Ferdinand Duckwitz, attache for shipping affairs in the German Legation in Copenhagen. Duckwitz assumed his post in Denmark in 1939. He continued to serve in this capacity during the occupation, but had no connection with any of the political or military departments. Until he issued the famous warning, Duckwitz had no direct contact with any Danish Jews, but he was in touch with non-Jewish Danes, and it was known that the information he had provided on various occasions has proven completely reliable. On September 28, 1943, Duckwitz warned that the deportation of the Jews was to be carried out within a few days. Although frightening information had been previously received on a number of occasions, this warning was believed and taken seriously because it was received from Duckwitz. Thus it was obvious that a comprehensive rescue operation [to save the Danish Jews] had to be undertaken at once, and it was undoubtedly Duckwitz's warning which galvanized all the factors into an immediate action a few days before the deportations was to take place.¹²³ A Danish leader in 1971 told about a statement that Duckwitz made to him answering the question why he acted to save Jews? "Everyone should see himself in the situation in which he, too, like his fellow men might find himself. I do not think that my life is more important than the lives of 7,000 Jews."¹²⁴

"Schindler
Juden"

Oscar Schindler was a German industrialist who in his factories in Poland employed several hundred Jews. He saved his Jewish employees from deportations. Those who worked in Schindler's factory were truly privileged. They enjoyed human living and working conditions and were spared of the atrocities of death camps. In the time of evacuations of the notorious Plaszow camp in Poland [Schindler's factory was a branch of the camp but his Jews were accommodated in special cabins] Schindler obtained a permit to convert his factory into a plant for the manufacture of armaments, move it near the town of Brunnlitz in the Sudetanland(his birthplace) and employ 1,100 Jews.¹²⁵ In addition to the approximately 500 Jews who worked for him in Cracow, Schindler added the names of 700 men to the list of employees. Among them were the leaders of the Zionist movement, whom he requested on the basis of their professional training as engravers, locksmiths, technicians, and the like, even though in reality they had no connection whatsoever to these professions. Also in the course liquidation of Plaszow, when most of the women from the camp were sent to Auschwitz, Schindler managed, through unusual and extraordinary efforts, to do what no one had ever done. He extricated 300 women from Auschwitz- the wives, daughters, and mothers of the men he had brought to his new factory in Brunnlitz.¹²⁶

After the war, a special phrase was coined- " Schindler Juden"- in reference to the 1,200 Jew who were rescued thanks to his special care. Schindler remained in contact with those he rescued throughout the world, and for many years he had visited Israel (where 250 of those he rescued live)

on the anniversary of their liberation.¹²⁷

Paul Grueninger
The Swiss Chief
of Police in St. Gallen

Paul Grueninger served as Chief of Police in St. Gallen, Switzerland. After Austria was annexed to the Third Reich, many Jews sought to flee in order to escape the Nazi persecution. Thousands attempted to cross the border into Switzerland, but the Swiss authorities opposed their entry. As the number of fleeing increased, the Swiss closed the border hermetically.¹²⁸

Grueninger could not reconcile himself to the bureaucratic directives. He knowingly endangered himself by exceeding his jurisdiction as Chief of Police in order to enable many refugees to cross the border and find shelter in Switzerland. There are no exact figures on the number of refugees who entered Switzerland thanks to Grueninger's help, but they certainly number at least several hundred.¹²⁹

Grueninger actions were discovered by the Swiss authorities, The District Court in St. Gallen found him guilty ; he was dismissed from his post and lost his pension.¹³⁰ Grueninger did not seek recognition for his deeds. For many years he lived quietly in St. Gallen, barely supporting himself as an assistant instructor. In fact, most of those who entered Switzerland thanks to his efforts did not even know to whom they owed their lives. In 1969 his name reached Yad VaShem and he was granted the title " Righteous Among the Nations." In 1969 he was also awarded official rehabilitation by the Swiss government.¹³¹

De Sousa Mendes,
Portugal Consul in France

Aristeded De Sousa Mendes served as Portugal Consul in Bordeaux France. Following the German occupation of Northern France, masses of refugees, among them many thousands of Jews, fled from the occupied zone to Vichy. Nearly 10,000 Jews were concentrated in Bordeaux alone. All of them had one desire- to escape to Spain via the Pyrenees, and from there to Portugal. From May 10, 1940, the Portugese Government refused to grant entry visas, and especially not to Jews. The consuate did not reply to inquiries and there was a general order not to stamp visas.¹³²

The consul, Aristedes de Sousa Mendes, a lawyer and a devout Catholic (he claimed to be of Marrano descent), was unable to remain indifferent to the refugees' suffering and torment. He admitted many of them to his house, and the entire floor and all passageways were crowded with children and women who slept there. Moreover, thousands waited in front of his house, in case the edict were rescinded. The consul went out and spoke to them : " My government has rejected the refugees's requests for visas, but I cannot let these people die. Many of them are Jews and our constitution states that religion and political views of a foreign subject shall not constitute grounds for their refused asylum in Portugal. I have decided to act in the spririt of this principle. I shall give anyone who so desires a visa... Even if I will be dismissed from my post I cannot act but as a Christian, faithful to the dictates of my conscience. " Thereupon, he set down to stamp visas for those in front of his house, with his wife, his two children, and a rabbi from Belgium, Rabbi Chaim Kruger, who lived in his house, helping him. For three full days they worked indefatigably, until, he was physiactlly unable to continue.¹³³ He continued to issue visas on his way to Portugal when , after

Lisbon heard of his activities , he was recalled.

On his way to Lisbon, Mendes passed the Spanish border town of Hendeye, where he found that the border had been closed by agreement with Portugal. For a moment it appeared that all his efforts had been in vain. Mendes understood that the Spanish authorities expected the refugees to cross the border at this station, and therefore issued orders to bar their entry, and stationed guards on alert. He therefore instructed the refugees to proceed to a nearby border station, and indeed no instructions forbidding crossing had been received there. Mendes identified himself as the Portuguese consul, and the refugees were permitted to enter Spain.¹³⁴

In Lisbon, Mendes was asked to account for his behavior and bear the consequences. He was dismissed from the foreign service for disobeying orders. His struggle to regain his post did not prove successful, and he also lost his property. He did, however, preserve his human dignity, and the lives of several thousand Jews. Mendes died in Portugal in 1954. To his dying day, he was convinced that the sacrifice he had made was insignificant in comparison to the rescue of the lives of those in distress.¹³⁵

Sempo Sugihara,
the Japanese Consul
in Kovno

Mentioning also should be made of Sempo Sugihara, the Japanese Consul in Kovno, who issued hundreds of visas to save Jews while disobeying the orders of the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

"The Foundation
to Sustain Righteous
Christians"

It was found that many "Righteous Among the Nations" are in need of help. In 1987 the Foundation to Sustain Righteous Christians was established to "retrieve the meaning of their act, discover their fate, and sweeten the remainder of their lives."¹³⁶ Among them are Janina Pawlicka who worked as a maid for a Jewish family in Poland before the war. During the war, Pawlicka remained in Warsaw and helped dozens of Jews in the ghetto. When the war ended, Pawlicka could not get a job because many Poles would not hire someone who helped the Jews. She had no family to turn to, and those whom she had saved had left for Israel or America. A survivor whom she met after the war offered Pawlicka to bring her to Israel with his own family. Pawlicka accepted the offer, grateful to have a new home and a new family in Israel.¹³⁷

Many rescuers had a common characteristic: they were quite ordinary people. They had "the ability to transcend fear.. and the ability to tolerate risk."¹³⁸

An outstanding contribution to the understanding of the "Righteous Among the Nations" can be found in The Altruistic Personality- Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe by Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliver.

The kindness and the humanity of rescuers during the dark days of the Holocaust serve as a beacon of hope for all mankind. Unfortunately their number was too small. The majority of the world did allow the Holocaust, the great human tragedy, to happen.

NOTES

* Echoes from the Holocaust

Kren, George M. " The Holocaust as History " p. 22

1 The Holocaust Years; Society on Trial

Foxman, Abraham " On Resistance " p. 95

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Ibid p. 96

5 Ibid

6 Ibid

7 Ibid p. 97

8 Ibid

9 Ibid

10 Ibid

11 Ibid pp. 97-98

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CHAPTER 7

" The Good Old Days"

The Holocaust as Seen
by Its Perpetrators and
Supported by Bystanders

A caption in the photograph album belonging to the last commandant of Treblinka, Kurt Franz, read " Those were the Days" (*Schöne Zeiten.*) Underneath the heading there were pictures of the extermination camp where at least 700,000 people were sent to the gas-chambers.¹

A policeman on the subject of his colleagues who participated in the massacres of the Jews, said: " They had a ball!... and they wanted money and gold. Don't let's kid ourselves, there was always something up for grabs during the Jewish actions." Pity was reserved for one's own kind... When 33,771 Jews were shot dead in the space of two days in Babi Yar, one of the marksmen remarked : " It is almost impossible to imagine what nerves of steel it took..."²

What kind of men were these who accepted murder as daily work ? They were perfectly ordinary people, with one difference ; they could act as members of the "master race." Hitherto undreamt-of-chances for promotion revealed themselves. They received pay bonuses, extra leave and privileges such as alcohol and cigarettes. And at all times a sense of power, for the state was happy to remove all sense of personal responsibility from them.³

Public Executions of Jews-
Festival for the Bystanders

The public mass executions were in many ways a festival. In Kovno (Lithuania) locals- among them mothers with their children- applauded as each Jew was beaten to death in front of them. Cheers and laughter rang out, as German soldiers stood by and took photographs. The military authorities were aware of this but did not intervene. German soldiers were sometimes prepared to travel long distances in order to obtain the best places at the blood " shooting festival."4 Army chaplains who looked on while children died in the Byelaya-Tserkov region of the Ukraine merely complied reports "so that no more would be said about the situation."5 Two of them became suffragan bishops after the war. No public prosecutor would have laid charges against these chaplains for failing to denounce the inhumanity publicly. To say nothing of those who gawped at the murder of the Jews out of curiosity or watched stunned.6 All of them were accessories.

Most of the perpetrators attempt to deny their part in the murders or to play down the facts. But even behind their excuses and cover up attempts the gruesome truth remains unbearably plain. For many the years under National Socialism were indeed ' Schone Zeiten' , even in the concentration and death camps.7

The Terrible Atrocities in Lithuania

In Lithuania the Germans employed the Lithuanian partisans in large-scale pogroms. During the first pogrom of these partisans, in the night of June 25 and 26, more than 1,500 Jews in Kaunas were eliminated, several synagogues were set on fire or destroyed by other methods and a Jewish quarter of about sixty houses was burnt down. On following nights 2,300 Jews were rendered harmless in the same way.8

A description of mass murder in Kovno is given in the following way by a German adjutant:

I arrived in Kovno on June 27th in the morning. While I was traveling through the town I went past a petrol station that was surrounded by a dense crowd of people. There was a large number of women in the crowd and they had lifted their children or stood them on chairs or boxes so that they could see better. At first I thought this must be a victory celebration or some type of sporting event because of the cheering, clapping, and laughter that kept breaking out. However, when I inquired what was happening I was told that the 'Death-dealer of Kovno' was at work and that this was where collaborators and traitors were finally meted out their rightful punishment! When I stepped closer, however, I became witness to probably the most frightful event that I have seen during the course of two world wars.

On the concrete forecourt of the petrol station a blond man of medium height, aged about twenty-five, stood leaning on a wooden club, resting. The club was as thick as his arm and came up to his chest. At his feet lay about fifteen to twenty dead or dying people. Water flowed continuously from a hose washing blood away into the drainage gully. Just a few step behind this man some twenty men, guarded by army civilians, stood waiting for their cruel execution in silent submission. In response to a cursory wave the next man stepped forward silently and was then beaten to death with the wooden club in the most bestial manner, each blow accompanied by enthusiastic shouts from the audience.9

A German photographer reported :

There was no more significant clashes in the city. Close to my quarters I noticed a crowd of people in the forecourt of a petrol station which was surrounded by a wall on three sides. The way to the road was completely blocked by a wall of people. I was confronted by the following scene ; in the left corner of the yard was a group of men, aged between thirty and fifty. There must have been forty to fifty of them. They were herded together and kept under guard by some civilians. The civilians were

armed with rifles and wore armbands. A young man- he must have been a Lithuanian... with rolled up sleeves was armed with an iron crowbar. He dragged out one man at a time from the group and struck him with the crowbar with one or more blows on the back of his head. Within three-quarters of an hour he had beaten to death the entire group of forty-five to fifty people in this way. I took a series of photographs of the victims...

After the entire group had been beaten to death, the young man put the crowbar on the side, fetched an accordion and went and stood on the mountain of corpses and played the Lithuanian national anthem. I recognized the tune and was informed by bystanders that this was the national anthem. The behavior of the civilians present (women and children) was unbelievable. After each man had been killed they began to clap and when the national anthem started up they joined in singing and clapping. In the front row there were women with small children in their arms who stayed there right until the end of the whole proceeding...10

The Bestial Massacre at Babi Yar

A truck driver wrote the following statement on the murder of 33,771 Jews in the Babi Yar ravine on September 29-30, 1941:

One day I was instructed to drive my truck outside the town. I was accompanied by an Ukrainian. After we had stopped in an area near piles of clothing the truck was immediately loaded up with clothing. I watched what happened when the Jews - men, women and children arrived. The Ukrainians led them past a number of different places where one after another they had to remove their luggage, then their coats, shoes and overgarments and also underwear. They also had to leave their valuables in a designated place. There was a special pile for each article of clothing. It all happened very quickly and anyone who hesitated was kicked or pushed by the Ukrainians to keep them moving. I don't think it was even a minute from each time each Jew took

off his coat before he was standing here completely naked. No distinction was made between men, women and children....

Once undressed, the Jews were led into a ravine. Two or three narrow entrances led to this ravine through which the Jews were channeled. When they reached the bottom of the ravine they were seized by members of the Schutzpolizei and made to lie down on the top of the Jews who already been shot. This all happened very quickly. The corpses were literally in layers. A police marksman came along and shot each Jew in the neck with a sub-machine-gun at the spot where he was lying. When the Jews reached the ravine they were so shocked by the horrifying scene that they completely lost their will. It may even have been that the Jews themselves lay down in rows to wait to be shot...

There were only two marksmen carrying out the executions. One of them was working at one end of the ravine, the other at the other end. I saw these marksmen stand on the layers of corpses and shoot one after the other...

The moment one Jew had been killed, the marksman would walk across the bodies of the executed Jews to the next Jew, who had meanwhile lain down, and shoot him. It went on in this way uninterruptedly, with no distinction being made between men, women and children. The children were kept with their mothers and shot with them.

I saw three rows of bodies lined up... How many layers of bodies there were on the top of each other I could not see. I was so astonished and dazed by the sight of the twitching blood-smearred bodies that I could not properly register the details. In addition to the two marksmen there was a 'packer's' at either entrance to the ravine. These 'packers' were Schutzpolizisten, whose job it was to lay the victim on the top of the other corpses so that all the marksman had to do as he passed was to fire a shot....¹¹

A very popular postcard used by the *Einsatzgruppen* included pictures of atrocities and the Babi Yar with the following text : " The war has not taken away our cheers and good spirit. This says it all... This 'Paradise'" .¹²

The Killing of Children

SS- *Obersturmführer* August Hafner reports on the killing of children in the " Good Old Days ":

... Then Blobel ordered me to have the children executed. I asked him, ' By whom should the shooting be carried out ? ' He answered, ' By the Waffen-SS. ' I raised an objection and said , ' They are all young men. How are we going to answer to them if we make them to shoot small children. ? ' To this he said, ' Then use your men. ' I then said, ' How can they do that ? They have small children as well'. This tug-of-war lasted about ten minutes... I suggested that the Ukrainian militia of the *Feldkommandant* should shoot the children. There were no objections from either side to this suggestion... I went out to the wood alone. The *Wehrmacht* had already dug the grave. The children were brought along in a tractor. I had nothing to do with the technical procedure. The Ukrainians were standing around trembling. The children were taken down from the tractor. They were lined up along the top of the grave and shot so that they fell into it. The Ukrainians did not aim at any particular part of the body. The children fell into the grave. The wailing was indescribable. I shall never forget the scene throughout my life. I find it very hard to bear. I particularly remember a small fair-haired girl who took me by the hand. She too was shot later.. The grave was near some woods. It was not near the rifle-range. Many children were hit four or five times before they died. ¹³

The Killing of Jews

is not Crime

A verdict against SS- *Untersturmführer* Max Taubner, 24 May 1943 includes the following :

The accused is a fanatical enemy of the Jews. At the start of service in the East he resolved to get rid of ' 20,000' Jews if possible. Together with his platoon he arrived in Novograd Volynsky in the Ukraine on September 8, 1942. He learned from the Ukrainian mayor that over 300 Jews were being held in a prison, The mayor asked for authorization to shoot them...He decided that the execution will be carried out by his platoon. Outside the village a grave was dug by the Ukrainian militia by the side of which the Jews- men, women, and children- had to kneel. They were shot at close range in the nape of the neck when the order was given...In Sholokhovo he executed 191 Jews. SS-Unterscharführer Muller, who did not belong to the accused's unit, but had his permission to take part in the execution, snatched children from their mothers. Then, holding them in his left hand, he shot them and threw them into the grave.

In Alexandriya four hundred and fifty Jews were shot by him and his unit.

Whereas, however, the executions in Novograd Volynsky and Sholokhovo proceeded in a more or less orderly fashion, in Alexandriya they degenerated into vicious excesses. The Jews whose job was to saw wood in the courtyard of the quarters were beaten on the pretext that they were not working properly. They were also beaten with spades, an act in which SS- *Sturmmann* Ackermann particularly distinguished himself. SS- *Sturmmann* Wustholz ordered the Jews to beat each other to death, promising that the survivors would not be executed. The Jews did in fact knock each other down, although they did not kill each other. The accused himself joined in with the beating and also hit Jewesses in the face with a whip. Whenever there

was a break he played the song 'You are Crazy, My Child' on an accordion. Some Jews were also beaten before the execution in a cellar at the quarters. On one occasion a couple of Jews had to tear down a wooden hut. It was arranged in such a way that the hut collapsed on top of them and they were buried underneath the ruins. These Jews were injured but not killed. There were also shootings which were not always authorized. In such cases individual Jews, after they had been beaten, were simply shot to death on the spot behind the house. On one occasion a Jew was hanged because this was what the accused wanted. ¹⁴

The guidelines of the SS and Police Supreme Court for sentencing Max Taubner included the following :

The accused shall not be punished because of the actions against the Jews as such. *The Jews have to be exterminated and none of the Jews that were killed is any great loss* (author's emphasis) Although the accused should have recognized that the extermination of the Jews was the duty of Kommandos which has been set up especially for this purpose, he should be excused for considering himself to have the authority to take part in the extermination of Jewry himself. Real hatred of the Jews was the driving motivation for the accused. ¹⁵

But the Nazis, the SS and Police Supreme Court had high morals as expressed in the trial : "...In the process the accused let himself be drawn into committing cruel actions in Alexandriya which are unworthy of a German man and an SS officer". ¹⁶

Killing for
the Sake of Family

Maximilian Grabner, head of the Political Department, "only took part in the murder of some three million people out of consideration for his family":

To kill three million people is in my view the greatest crime of all. I only took part in this crime because there was nothing I could do to change anything. The blame for this crime lays with National Socialism, I myself was never a National Socialist. Nevertheless, I still had to join the Party.... *I am Roman Catholic and today still believe in God.* Author's emphasis) I believe there must be such a thing as divine justice as well as justice earth. I only took part in the murder of some three million people out of consideration for my family. I was never an anti-Semite and would still claim today that every person has the right to life.¹⁷

Following the "Divine"

Orders of the Fuhrer

Thousands of bureaucrats and millions of ordinary citizens of Germany were participants in the Holocaust in various forms. They all considered themselves to follow the "divine" orders of the Fuhrer and the Nazi leadership. All of them kept records and submitted reports.

Rudolf Hoss, the commandant of Auschwitz, gave the following affidavit on April 3, 1945:

I commanded Auschwitz until 1 December 1943 and estimate at least two and half million victims were executed or eliminated there by gassing and burning. At least a further half a million died as a result of hunger and illness, which makes a total about 3 million. This figure represents about 70 or 80 per cent of all people who were sent as prisoners to Auschwitz. The rest were selected for slave labor in the factories and workshops in the concentration camps."¹⁸

An SS-Doctor kept a diary. An entry on October 3, 1942 reads :

"Today fixed fresh living material from human liver and spleen as well as pancreas, also fixed lice from typhus-fever patients in absolute alcohol. In

Auschwitz whole streets have gone down with typhus..."¹⁹

Dr. Kremer, the doctor, elaborated on this and other entries at a hearing on July 30, 1947 in Cracow:

In my diaries I mention in several places extracting fresh living human material in order to conduct experiments on it. This happened in the following way: For a long time I had been interested in the human organism as a result of hunger. In Auschwitz I talked this over with Wirth, who told me that I could extract fresh living material for these investigations from those prisoners who had been killed by injections of phenol. In order to select subjects I went into the last block where the prisoners who reported sick were examined...Many patients were designated to be liquidated. People the SS doctor designated to be liquidated were taken away by SS personnel. They were designated to have "general bodily weakness." I observed the prisoners in this group carefully and whenever one of them particularly interested me because of his advance stage of starvation, I ordered the medical orderly to reserve him and to inform me when this patient would be killed by injection.

At the appointed time...the patient was laid down still alive on the dissection table. I would go up to the table and ask the patient to give me some details essential to my research. For example, for his weight before his detention,, how much weight he had lost since his detention, whether he had taken any medication recently, etc. After I had been given this information a medical orderly would come and kill the patient with an injection in the heart area. *To my knowledge all these patients were killed with phenol injections. The patient died immediately after being given such an injection. I myself never administered fatal injections.* (author' emphasis)²⁰

All Records Should be Destroyed ;

All Bodies Should be Incinerated

The Nazi leadership in deceiving everybody and everywhere did not want to have records of the " Holocaust. "

However Rudolf Hoss, commandant of Auschwitz, whom in his own words "history will mark as the greatest mass murderer of all times" wrote in his biography on the elimination of the mass graves :21

On the occasion of his visit in the summer of 1942 SS-*Reichsführer* Himmler watched the entire extermination process carefully from the unloading of the transport to the clearing of Bunker II. At that time the bodies were not burnt. He did not have any complaints, nor did he talk about anything he had seen either. Shortly after the *Reichsführer's* visit, *Standartenführer* Paul Blobel from Eichmann's office arrived and transmitted to us an order from the RFSS that all mass graves were to be dug up and the bodies were to be incinerated.

The ashes were to be dispersed so that in the future it would impossible to establish how many people had been burnt. Blobel was already experimenting with different incineration methods in Kulmhof. He had been ordered by Eichmann to show me the installation... Blobel had a number of different temporary ovens built and was using wood and petrol residues as fuel. He had also tried destroying the bodies by blowing them up with explosives but this had not been very successful. The ashes were first ground to dust in a bone mill and then scattered in a large expanse of wooded land. *Standartenführer* Blobel was given the job of pinpointing all the mass graves throughout the Eastern Territories and of eliminating them. 'His staff code name was ' 1005' The work itself was carried out by *Judenkommandos* [units of Jews] who were shot after work.. The concentration camp of Auschwitz provided a constant supply of Jews for Kommando' 1005.' ... *Standartenführer* Blobel had a fairly clear idea of the number of mass graves on the Eastern Territories, but was *dutybound to strict silence* . . (author's emphasis) 22

Nazi Determination to Destroy the Jews Until the Last Minute of the War

Between 1941 and 1945, murdering and extermination of the Jews was as great a priority for Hitler, the Nazi leaders, the Nazi bureaucrats, the German Army, and to a great degree for most of Germans as winning World War II, if anything, greater. When the Nazis were forced to withdraw from Greece in 1944, almost all German trains were diverted to that country to bring back the troops; not a single train, however, was diverted from those that were taking Jews to death camps.²³ When the Germans ordered a ban on all nonmilitary rail traffic, in order to free all trains for a summer offensive in southern Russia, the only trains exempted from this order were those transporting Jews to death camps.²⁴ When the Jews of Hungary were to be deported in 1944, on the eve the Normandy invasion, trains were available.

The Variety of Perpetrators

The Bureaucrats of the Final Solution

The perpetrators were people who played a specific role in the formulation or implementation of anti-Jewish measures. In most cases, a participant understood his function, and he ascribed it to his position and duties. What he did was impersonal. He had been empowered or instructed to carry out his mission. Moreover, no one man and no one organization was solely responsible for the destruction of the Jews. No single budget was allocated for this purpose. The work was diffused in a widespread

bureaucracy, and each man could feel his contribution was a small part of an immense undertaking. For these reasons, an administrator, clerk, or uniformed guard never referred to himself as a perpetrator. He realized, however, that the process of destruction was deliberate, and that once he had stepped into this maelstrom, his deed would be indelible. In this sense, he would always be what he had been, even if he remained reticent, or silent about what he had done.

The Foremost Perpetrator:

Adolf Hitler

The first and foremost perpetrator was Adolf Hitler himself. He was the supreme architect of the operation without him it would have been inconceivable. Hitler was always in the limelight, but most of the labor was carried out in the shadows by a vast establishment of familiar functionaries and ascending newcomers. In this conglomeration, some men displayed eagerness, while others, had doubts. Within the leadership were many professionals, including ubiquitous lawyers and indispensable physicians. When the process was extended to the four corners of Europe, the machinery of destruction became international as Germans were joined by governments in satellite states and by individual collaborators in the occupied countries.²⁵

The above assessment by one of the most famous writers on the Holocaust, Raul Hilberg, is rejected by many historians and scholars including the author. Critics claim that Hilberg presents the Holocaust as the result, mostly, of the efficiency and successful and ambitious organization of the German bureaucratic machinery to implement the "Final Solution"; and ignores the anti-Semitic motivation, the "Racial Aryan Superiority" ideology of the Nazis, and the cruel manifestation of "man's inhumanity

against man" by wanting to kill an entire people for only one reason, that they were Jews.

Collaborators Are Happy to Join in the Killing of Jews

The "Good Old Days ", the cleansing of the Jews and the desire to implement " The Final Solution of the Jewish Question " was welcomed and supported by many European governments and the local population. Anti-Semitism was rampant in many countries and the people were imbued with it. In some countries like Poland, Hungary, Romania, Russia there was anti-Semitic legislation before the war. Anti-Semitic sentiments were strong among the Poles, Austrians, French, Hungarians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Russians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Romanians, Serbs, Croats. The Holocaust gave these and other countries an opportunity to get rid of the Jews and seize their properties and businesses.

Throughout Europe the success of the perpetrators and with it the fate of the Jews hinged first of all on each country's wartime status vis-a-vis Germany. Wherever German rule was total and supreme, the Jewish were consigned to annihilation. In " Greater Germany " (Germany and Austria), in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, in occupied Poland, Russia, and in the Baltic countries, the Jews came directly under the jurisdiction of the SS. Their fate was determined.²⁶

In other countries of Europe -allied to Germany, so-called neutrals, and those which, though invaded and occupied by the Germans, nevertheless retained some autonomy- the fate of the Jews depended on each country's commitment to civic equality and on its historical treatment of the Jewish population. Variations from country to country as to the fate of the Jews

derived partly from differences in the degree of autonomy permitted by the Germans. German civil administration in Holland and Norway, for example was more rigorous than German military rule in Belgium.

The Record of the Holocaust

France

On June 22, 1940, Marshall Henri-Phillipe Petain signed an armistice agreement with Germany. Three-fifths of France was surrendered to German control. German occupied France was divided into three different jurisdictions; Northern France was assigned to the military governor of Belgium, Alsace and Lorraine were quasi-incorporated into the German Reich, each province governed by a Gauleiter. The rest of the occupied zone was ruled by a succession of military governors. A French government was established in unoccupied France on July 2, 1940 at Vichy. The Vichy regime completely repudiated the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Petain broadcasted a pledge of cooperation with Germany. In April 1942, Pierre Laval, who advocated total collaborationism, became the virtual head of the French state.

There were 350,000 Jews who resided in France just before the German invasion. They were less than 1 percent of the population.²⁷ The Jewish population was concentrated in Paris, Alsace-Lorraine, and eastern and northern provinces. In the wake of the German invasion, France's rapid collapse, and the armistice, large number of Jews fled south. By mid-1940 195,000 Jews lived there, of whom it was believed 145,000 were native-born, 20,000 East European Jews, who came to France between 1920 and 1930 and 30,000 Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria. The Jews in

Alsace-Lorraine began to be expelled upon the German occupation, and by November 1940 those still there were ordered out, their property confiscated. They themselves were dumped in the unoccupied zone. In occupied France some 120,000 Jews remained in Paris and in smaller communities.

A decree of October 4, 1940 authorized the internment of foreign Jews. Consequently about 25,000 Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria were interned in various camps.²⁸ These internees were soon forced into labor brigades, and large number of them died of hunger, cold, and disease. On June 2, 1941, a statute basing itself on measures enacted by the Germans in the occupied territories defined the status of the Jews more rigidly and set in motion the expropriation and "Aryanization" of Jewish property. A census of Jews and Jewish property was also decreed.

Jews in the occupied zone were subject to both the decrees of the German military government and the decrees of Vichy. The SS took over responsibility for the anti-Jewish programs. On September 27, 1940, the Germans issued an ordinance that defined the status of the Jews in racial terms, ordering a census of all Jews and requiring public identification of Jewish businesses. On October 18, 1940, all Jewish enterprises had to be registered; their expropriation and "Aryanization" followed. *The French bureaucracy was used to implement these ordinances. The Paris police compiled a card index of Jews in Paris, by name, street, occupation, and nationality.* (author's emphasis) In May and June 1941, the first roundups of Jews began; many were sent to Drancy which was to serve as a chief transit camp for Auschwitz.²⁹ On March 28, 1942 the first deportation train left Drancy for Auschwitz. 12,884 non-French Jews, including women and children, were rounded up. Those without families were sent to Drancy. The remaining 9,000, including 4,000 children, were penned up in a vast

sports stadium where they spent a week in horrible conditions before being shipped off to Auschwitz. (Only 30 adults returned alive after the war ; no child survived.) ³⁰

In the unoccupied territory in August 1942 the Vichy Government handed over to the Germans fifteen thousand foreign Jews interned in camps in the unoccupied territory. After November , 1942, when the Nazis occupied all of France, the deportations continued from the south. In the last months of the war, in addition to the deportations, mass execution also diminished the Jewish population.

On August 24, right after the liberation of Paris, Drancy was liberated. The number of Jews who were deported, executed by the Germans, or who perished in the internment camps is estimated at 90,000.³¹

Historical research proves without doubt the voluntary complicity of the Vichy government in the actions against the Jews.³² French collaboration can be seen as a precondition for the successful operation of the Final Solution in France and as salient factor in determining the number of deportees. It was Vichy's participation in the rounding up, concentration and dispatch that made possible the application of the Final Solution in France. Acting alone, German troops and police in both zones would have proved ineffective, and the deportation and the death rate among French Jews would have been considerably reduced.³³

Belgium

Before the German invasion about 90,000 Jews lived in Belgium, 1 percent of the total population.³⁴ Of these, 15,000 were refugees from Germany and Austria, most of the others were themselves immigrants, predominantly from Eastern Europe, or children of such immigrants.

In October 1940, six months after the German occupation, anti-Jewish policies began to be promulgated. On October 28 Jews were defined according to German racial standards and ordered to be registered. Jews were to be excluded from public service, schools, law, press and other media. Jewish businesses were to be registered. The registration, completed later, showed 42,000 Jews in Belgium, only a few thousand of them native-born. Well over 20,000 were in hiding, and an estimated 25,000 fled to France, from which they most were subsequently deported.³⁵ On June 6, 1942, Jews were forced to wear the Star of David arm bands.

Early in 1942 deportations began. Queen Elizabeth and Cardinal van Roey has asked protection for the few thousand Jews of Belgian nationality. The German representative agreed to exempt them, but the promise was not fully kept. About a thousand Jews of Belgian nationality were actually deported. According to German records 25,437 Jews were deported to Auschwitz. Several thousand were sent to Lodz and deported from there. Considerable numbers of Jews died in Belgium of hunger, disease, or overwork in labor and transit camps or as victims of random shootings and terror. In sum, about 40,000 of the 65,000 Jews who remained in Belgium perished. At liberation, about 20,000 Jews were found in Belgium, 6,000 of them German and Austrian refugees, 8,000 Polish Jews, the rest Belgian and Dutch nationals.

Luxembourg

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, is included in this survey to illustrate the Nazi determination to implement the "Final Solution"- the destruction of European Jewry. The total population of Luxembourg in 1940 was 300,000. The Nazis invaded it in violation of its neutrality. Grand

Duchess Charlotte and the Cabinet fled and established a government -in-exile in London.

In 1935 about 3,000 Jew lived in Luxembourg, 1 percent of the population. It was an ancient community that had been reconstituted after the French Revolution. When the Germans invaded Luxembourg, over 1,000 Jews fled or were evacuated by French troops. With the German occupation, the local *Volkdeutschen* emerged to take active part in anti-Jewish persecutions. Jews were ghettoized, compelled to wear arm bands, assigned to forced labor and their property was expropriated. A policy of expulsion and deportation went into effect early, since Luxembourg was to be incorporated into the Reich. Some 800 Jews were deported to Lodz, Auschwitz and Theresienstadt.³⁶ After the liberation about 400 Jews were found to have survived in Luxembourg.

Holland

In spite of the sympathetic view that Holland should be considered a courageous country during the Holocaust, the reality is different and sad. Out of a Jewish population of Holland of 140,552, 110,000 were deported , of whom less than 5,500 returned.³⁷ Only 25 percent, 35,000 ,of Dutch Jews survived. *The Dutch Jewish death rate was the highest in Western Europe and in the East, only Poland had a higher kill ratio.*

Holland was invaded by the Germans without warning on May 10, 1940. Dutch resistance crumbled, and Rotterdam was surrendered on May 13. Several hours later, its entire center was wantonly destroyed by German air bombardment. The government headed by Queen Wilhelm, fled to London, where it continued to exist in exile.³⁸ On May 14, Holland capitulated to the Germans. Holland, slated for eventual incorporation into

the Reich as a "Germanic" state, was governed by a civilian German administrator, the Austrian Artur Seyss-Inquart. He suspended the Dutch parliament and Council of State, subordinating the Dutch civil service to his rule. Important posts were assigned to Dutch nazis, who became prominent in the country's governance.³⁹

There were anti-Jewish legislations, including the defining of the Jews in racial terms, registration of Jewish businesses, etc. On February 12, 1941, the Jewish Council was formed under duress amid a series of violent incidents between Jews and Dutch nazis, occurring mostly in Amsterdam's old Jewish section.⁴⁰ On February 19, in south Amsterdam, a more prosperous section of Amsterdam, where one fourth of the city's Jews lived, violent incidents occurred between a German police patrol and Jews. The German seized 400 Jews, twenty to thirty-five year old, who were eventually deported to Mauthausen.⁴¹ On March 12, 1941, the Germans began the process of "Aryanizing" Jewish property, and a decree of May 21, 1942, authorized complete expropriation.⁴² In the spring of 1941 a Central Office for Jewish Emigration was charged with rounding up the Jews and deporting them.⁴³

In January 1942 forced-labor camps for Jews were set up. Meanwhile the Dutch Jews began to be concentrated in Amsterdam. On April 29, 1942, the identifying Jewish star was introduced. Jews were restricted in their occupational activities. Curfew was introduced.⁴⁴

In July 1942, deportations began, continuing through September 1943. Jews were concentrated in camps until schedules permitted their entrainment to Auschwitz. Because the Dutch and Germans kept meticulous records, it is known that approximately 110,000 Jew were deported from Holland and a total of 5,450 people (2,361 men and 3,089 women) returned,

less than 5 percent. Some 1,150 sent to Auschwitz survived; fewer than 20 of the 34,313 sent to Sobibor; 2,000 of the 5,000 sent to Theresienstadt; about half of the 4,000 deported to Bergen Belsen; and of the 1,750 Jews deported to Mauthausen, there is one recorded survivor.⁴⁵

Here are some other facts about Holland . Before the war, the National Socialist Party in Holland had more than 100,000 members in a population that then totaled about 8 million, the largest indigenous National Socialist Party in Europe, save perhaps Austria's. More than 30,000 Dutch volunteered, after the Germans invaded, to serve with the Nazis and their Waffen SS, again one of the highest percentages in Europe. The Germans ruled Holland through a brutally efficient occupation of barely one thousand men and women, and an administration that would have been impossible without the active cooperation of thousands of Dutch civil servants from the country's well-disciplined bureaucracy. Westerbork and other Dutch concentration camps were run mainly by the Dutch SS, not by Germans. *And the brutality of the indigenous Dutch SS was such that at the Amersfoort Camp, for example, the German-sponsored Dutch Jewish Council once officially protested to the Germans the ill-treatment of the Jews by the Dutch Gestapo.*⁴⁶

Germany
and Austria

When the Nazis seized power in 1933, 500,000 Jews, or about 1 percent of the population lived in Germany. Subject to terror and an accelerating process of discrimination, isolation, and expropriation, nearly 150,000 Jews, 30 percent of the 1933 population, emigrated by November 1938.⁴⁷ The pogrom of November 9-10, 1938 (Kristallnacht) and

subsequent German policy of forced emigration hastened the exit of another 150,000 Jews.⁴⁸

In 1940 the Germans began to deport Jews into Poland. On September 1, 1941, a police decree was issued compelling all Jews over six years of age to wear an identifying Star of David.⁴⁹ In October 1941 general deportations began to the major ghettos of Poland. Over 40,000 Reich Jews, regarded as "privilege" deportees were sent to Theresienstadt. In May 1943 Berlin was declared free of Jews.⁵⁰

At the time of the Anschluss, the annexation of Austria to Germany in 1938, 200,000 Jews lived in Austria, 170,000 in Vienna alone. Under pressured emigration by the Gestapo 120,000 Jews left Austria by the time war broke out. Another 6,000 left by the end of 1939. An estimated 65,000 were killed in death camps, many at Mauthausen, the largest Nazi concentration camp in Austria, near the town of the same name, eighty miles west of Vienna on the Danube near Linz.⁵¹

When the war ended, the 28,000 Jews surviving in Germany and Austria were, for the most part, Jews only by Nazi racial standards.⁵²

Austria together with Germany and by itself played a major role in the Holocaust. The country's Jews, the vast majority of whom lived in Vienna were slaughtered.⁵³ As soon as the Anschluss took effect, Jews were paraded through the streets of the capital and forced to scrub away with lye, using their own shirts and coats and bare hands, the anti-Nazi political slogans that were scrawled across sidewalks and buildings, toilets and gutters.⁵⁴

The campaign was even more vicious outside Vienna. In Hitler's hometown of Linz, a pogrom preceded Hitler's arrival in the city in March. The "cleansing" was carried out so thoroughly that on Kristallnacht November 9-10, 1938, eight months later, local storm troopers were unable

to find any Jewish property that had not already been looted or expropriated. The only remaining Jewish structure was the synagogue, emptied of its congregation, most of whom had fled; the Germans nevertheless burned it to the ground. The remaining three hundred Jews of Linz were then subjected to daily humiliation, until they were deported in 1942 to concentration camps in Poland, where virtually all died.⁵⁵

Austria, whose population was around 7 million before the war, compared with Germany's roughly 65 million people at that time, supplied nearly 75 percent of the staff of the Nazi concentration camps. About 80 percent of the entourage of Adolf Eichmann, in charge of transporting European Jews to the death camps, were Austrian. And Austria had a higher percentage of Nazi party members than Germany.

Slovakia

In March 1939 Slovakia was declared an independent state carved out from Czechoslovakia under Nazi rule with Father Joseph Tiso, a Catholic priest, as Prime Minister, and with the Hlinka People's Party, a right-wing Catholic nationalist group, as the only legal party. In October 1939, Tiso was elected president. In August 1944, the Germans occupied Slovakia.

In 1938 about 135,000 Jews resided in Slovakia, of whom 40,000 lived in the territory ceded to Hungary (Ruthenia and Subcarpathia). About 5,000 emigrated voluntarily before the war, leaving about 90,000 Jews, 3 percent of the population.

In April 1939 the new Slovak state began to enact anti-Jewish legislation, defining the status of a Jew along religious rather than racial lines (Slovakia was a Catholic country, ruled by a Catholic priest and a Catholic party.) In rapid succession came a series of decrees excluding and restricting

Jews in various professions and occupations. Anti-Semitic violence on part of the Hlinka Guard accompanied the administrative anti-Semitism.⁵⁶

In August 1940 the notorious SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Dieter Wisliceny, Eichmann's representative from the Reich Security Main Office, arrived in Slovakia as an adviser on Jewish affairs. The Hlinka Guard and the Slovak Volunteers in the SS were reorganized on the model of the SS and given the responsibility of carrying out anti-Jewish measures.⁵⁷

Deportations began late in 1941. By September 1942 some 58,000, 75 percent of the Slovak Jews, had been deported, mostly to Auschwitz. ⁵⁸ Under the German occupation 18,500 more Jews were deported. No more than 5,000 Jews remained in the country in hiding or on Aryan papers. About 10,000 of those deported in 1944 survived and returned to Slovakia.⁵⁹

"Slovakia occupied a special place on the map of the Nazi genocide" according to some major historians of the Holocaust.⁶⁰

In Slovakia a Catholic President, a Catholic Party, and a people imbued with anti-Semitism wrote a shameful chapter of the Holocaust

Hungary

Hungary's policies before and during the war can be best understood in the light of her revanchist goals. In November 1938 Hungary joined Germany in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, annexing some Slovakian districts and a part of Subcarpathian Ruthenia. In March 1939, when Slovakia declared itself an independent state, Hungary occupied the rest of Ruthenia. In August 1940, Hungary received northern Transylvania from Rumania under the Vienna Award. As repayment, Hungary joined the Tripartite Pact on November 20, 1940. On April 1941, Hungary occupied part of northeastern Yugoslavia. On June 22, 1941, Hungarian forces joined

the Germans in invading Russia. In early 1943, however, Hungary appeared in Hitler's eyes, to be acting more a neutral than a German ally. In April 1943 Hitler summoned the regent of Hungary, Admiral Miklos Horthy, to his headquarters near Salzburg and asked the dismissal of the government and the elimination of Hungary's Jewry. In March, 1944, with the war going badly for Germany, Hitler again summoned Horthy and members of his cabinet to Klessheim near Salzburg. Hitler confronted Horthy what he regarded as treachery, declaring that Germany had to occupy Hungary. Horthy was held incommunicado for a day; when he returned home on March 19, 1944, the German occupation of Hungary had been completed. A new Hungarian government was formed under a former Hungarian minister in Berlin. The real rulers in Hungary thenceforth were the SS. In October 1944, Russian forces crossed into Hungary. The Budapest radio announced that Horthy asked for an armistice. The German SS reacted swiftly on October 16, by kidnapping Horthy's son and holding him under threats. Horthy was forced to appoint the leader of the Nazi Hungarian Arrow Cross Party as Prime Minister. The last German fled Hungary by April 4, 1945.⁶¹

While the Hungarian Jewry was one a most assimilated and patriotic one, (in 1938 there were 35,000 baptized Jews in Hungary)⁶² its losses in the Holocaust were enormous. Major deportations started almost immediately after the German invasion (March 19, 1944) and within a year 400,000 Hungarian Jews were murdered in Auschwitz, and other death camps, and on death marches.

But all this tragedy did not happen in a vacuum.

Hungarian Jews had been emancipated in 1867, but the resentment on the part of the non-Jewish population-because of the territorial losses in World War I., chaotic economic conditions, and the abortive Communist dictatorship of Bela Kun-were vented on the Jews. Miklos Horthy came to

power as a blaze of pogrom raged in Hungary, particularly in the provinces. The violence was followed by various administrative measures eliminating most Jews from public service and restricting their admission into universities. By the mid-1930s, under the impact of National Socialism in Germany and its Hungarian admirers, anti-Semitism intensified.⁶³

On May 24, 1938, a month after Hitler's annexation of Austria, the Hungarian parliament, in an effort to appease Hitler and prevent seizure by the Hungarian Nazis, enacted its first anti-Jewish law. The law limited employment of Jews in private businesses to 20 percent.⁶⁴ A year later, more a far-reaching anti-Jewish law was passed, defining the status of the Jews, barring them from leading positions in the media, prohibiting the issuance of new trade licenses or renewal of the old ones. The law also barred further admission of Jews to the professions until their share fell to below 6 percent. It authorized the government to expropriate, with compensation, Jewish landed property. Jews could no longer acquire Hungarian citizenship by naturalization, marriage, or adoption. Voting rights of non native Jews or those whose forebearers were not permanently resident before 1868 were canceled.⁶⁵

After Munich and the Vienna Awards, Hungary added another 250,000 Jews to its Jewish population of 400,000. There were, besides, some 100,000 Christians, who were regarded "racial" Jews subject to anti-Jewish laws.⁶⁶

In August 1941 the Hungarian government rounded up some 17,000 stateless Jews in the annexed Ruthenian territory and pushed them over to Kamenets-Podolsk in the German held Ukraine, but the Germans complained that the Jews disrupted military communications. After the Hungarians drove off several thousands to be used as slave laborers, the German *Einsatzkommandos* massacred the remaining 11,000.⁶⁷ Several thousand

Yugoslav Jews in the northern Hungarian part of Yugoslavia were also massacred by the Hungarian occupying forces.⁶⁸

The virtual German occupation of Hungary in March 1944 and the installation of the pro-German government drastically transformed the situation of the Hungarian Jews. On March 19, the very day of the German takeover, Eichmann himself came to Budapest with a battery of SS officers in charge of Jewish affairs. Soon the yellow star was introduced and the Jews were concentrated in designated places.

To carry out the deportations of Jews Eichmann divided Hungary into six zones: Zone I, Carpathia; Zone II, Transylvania; III, northern Hungary; IV southern Hungary east of the Danube; V. Transdanubia, including the suburbs of Budapest; VI. Budapest proper.⁶⁹

The Arrow Cross-*Nyilas* (Hungarian Nazi) government, the army, especially the gendarmes and a large segment of the population supported the Final Solution for Hungarian Jews and for Jews of other countries and were glad to get rid of the Jews which enabled them to confiscate their properties.

Rumania

When war broke out, Rumania was under the control of King Carol's dictatorial government. In 1938, threatened by the spectacular rise to power of the Nazilike Iron Guard, Carol dissolved all the parties and concentrated power in his own hand. In September 1940, in a bloodless military coup General Ion Antonescu became the leader of Rumania. All political parties and movements except the Iron Guard were outlawed. Some 120,000 German troops entered Rumania as a "military advisory mission" to "protect" Rumania's oilfields. In November, Rumania joined the Axis.⁷⁰

In January 1941, the Iron Guard carried out a terrible massacre of the

Jews and its other "enemies." Rumanian armed forces joined the German forces and participated in the invasion of Russia in June 1941.⁷¹ Rumanian army units and Rumanian police also took part in Einsatzgruppe D.. After the Red Army offensive in 1944, Antonescu was arrested, and King Michael surrendered to the Russians on August 28, 1944.

The Jewish population of prewar Rumania was 757,000. In August 1940 some 150,000 Jews in Transylvania came under Hungarian rule. The Jews made up 4 percent of the Rumanian population.⁷²

Rumania never lived up to its obligations undertaken after World War I to recognize all Jews living in its territory as Rumanian nationals, and it intensified its attacks on the right of the Jews in the interbellum period. In 1938, a special decree, "Revision of Citizenship", stripped a substantial number of Rumanian Jews of their citizenship.⁷³ Severe economic discrimination and violent anti-Semitism terrorized the Jewish population. This was not new as Rumania was one of the most anti-Semitic countries in the nineteenth century.

In 1940, under King Carol, the government enacted new anti-Jewish statutes. Jews were expelled from the cultural life of the country and from all government service, including the army. In October 1940, under Antonescu, anti-Jewish legislation provided for the "Rumanization" of Jewish property. A month later, Jews were made liable for forced labor, without pay, instead of military service.

There was a Commissar for Jewish Questions in Antonescu's government, to handle the problems of ghettoization and deportations. The economic exploitation of the Jews was in the jurisdiction of the Labor Minister. This administrative anti-Semitism was, from the start, accompanied by pogroms and violence. In January 1941, a massacre took

place in Bucharest, the capital of Rumania, in which about 171 Jews were murdered in an especially abhorrent manner.⁷⁴

With the invasion of the Soviet Union and the recapture of northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, unbridled plunder and murder of Jews were authorized by the Rumanian Army's high command. The first major wartime pogroms occurred in the the Rumanian city of Iasi in June 1941, organized by special Rumanian troops assigned to rounding up, deporting and murdering Jews.⁷⁵ Thereafter, thousands of Jews were packed in cattle cars and shipped out without food and water, to no particular destination. Those who did not die of suffocation were shot. About 8,000 died.⁷⁶ In Czernovitz and surrounding 12,000 Jews were killed; in Bessarabia over 200,000.⁷⁷ *Rumanian army units working with Einsatzgruppe D in southern Russia dismayed the Germans with their passion for killing and their disregard for disposal of the corpses.*⁷⁸

In August 1941 the Rumanians began to expell Bessarabian Jews across the Dniester River, in territory under German occupation. The Germans resisted having this area become a dumping ground for unwanted Jews, but agreed that Transnitria, the area between the Dniester and the Bug Rivers, could serve as a reservation for Rumanian Jews. By mid-November 1941 over 120,000 Jews had been deported, some 200,000 Jews had been shipped to Transnitria, nearly two-thirds of whom were already dying of hunger and epidemics. By September 1943, only some 50,000 Rumanian Jews remained alive in Transnitria, along with 25,000 to 30,000 Russian Jews, native inhabitants of that area.⁷⁹

Early in the summer of 1942 Eichmann's representative, Gustav Richter, operating out of the German legation in Bucharest, reached an agreement with the Rumanian government regarding the deportation of the

Rumanian Jews to Lublin, but the Rumanians changed their minds a few months later.⁸⁰ The reasons has more to do with the evaluation of the war than with changing sentiments . Rumania continued to oppress the remaining Jewish population by labor exploitation and expropriation.

At the end only some 50,000 Rumanian Jews survived in Transnitria. Some 50,000 Rumanian Jews had been deported to Siberia during the Russian occupation, and their fate is not known. Most of the others were in the path of *Einsatzgruppe D*. About 300,000 Jews of Old Rumania survived.

Anti-Semitism was a part of life in most of provinces and among most of the Rumanians. The Iron Guard collaborated with the Nazis and Rumanian soldiers killed Jews together with the Einsatzgruppen. Jewish blood was cheap in Rumania too. Pogroms had a long history in Rumania and this "large " pogrom, the Holocaust, the Final Solution, was welcomed.

Yugoslavia

When war broke out Yugoslavia has remained neutral. On March 27, 1941 Hitler ordered the invasion of Yugoslavia. The government capitulated on April 17, though guerilla forces continued their resistance.⁸¹

Yugoslavia was partitioned . Serbian Macedonia was ceded by the Germans to Bulgaria. The northeastern basin was annexed by Hungary. Old Serbia, with Belgrade as its capital, came under German military rule, with a local puppet government established in August 1941.⁸² Virtual role of the country was in the hands of the German Chief of the Administrative Staff at the Military Commander Headquarters.

Croatia declared its independence on April 10, 1941⁸³ and a puppet government was established in Zagreb, under Ante Pavlovic, leader of the *Ustachi*, a Croat nationalits terrorist organization. (Pavlovic lived in the

United States in California for many years after the war.)

Partisan organizations emerged; the most famous leader was Josip Broz, called Tito. By early 1944 the partisans gained ground. In September 1944 the Germans began to retreat; on October 20, 1944, Russian troops and Yugoslav partisans ousted the Germans from Belgrade. The last Germans left Croatia on May 4, 1945.⁸⁴

Some 76,000, 4 percent of the total population, lived in Yugoslavia before the German occupation.⁸⁵

Serbia

Of the twelve thousand Jews in Old Serbia, eight thousand lived in Belgrade, where within a week of the German occupation, the Germans began to register them and introduced the identifying Star of David. In May 1941 Jews were ordered into forced-labor brigades. On May 31 the military commander issued anti-Jewish regulations defining Jews, ordering the registration of their property, and removing them from the economic life of the country.⁸⁶ Aryanization of the property began in July.

Anti-Jewish violence on the part of the German troops and the Volkdeutsche was widespread. In August 1941, the German army carried out a mass internment of adult male Jews, setting up one camp after another. Since death camps were not ready yet, the Germans undertook to shoot the interned Jews en masse, and by mid-November had murdered about five thousand male Jews. In December they interned women and children and shot them too. *The few hundred surviving Jews in hiding were hunted down by Serbian collaborators and turned over to the Germans. By mid-1941, the Germans in Serbia had succeeded in "solving the Jewish question."*⁸⁷

Croatia

Over thirty thousand Jews lived in Croatia and thousand of them in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Standard anti-Jewish legislation was introduced right after Pavelic's government was set up, defining the status of the Jews, requiring the registering of Jewish property, ordering identifying badges for Jews and Jewish businesses. Jews were also ordered to pay heavy levies. Forced labor was introduced within the month. Under a decree of June 26, 1941, and one of November 23, 1941, mass arrests and internment of Jews were ordered.⁸⁸

By October 1941 most of the Jews in Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina were engaged in forced labor languishing in camps, or had already been shot. In August 1941 some 9,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz.⁸⁹ Small groups were deported in 1943 and 1944, including many who have found refuge in the Italian zone, , which had after September 1943, come under German control. Jewish losses for all of Yugoslavia are estimated at about sixty-thousand.

Many Serbs and Croatian collaborated with the Nazis to solve the Jewish question. The Pavelic Croatian government was one of most brutal one in murdering Jews. Here too long-standing religious prejudices and the teaching of both of the Greek Orthodox(Serbian) Church and the Latin (Croatian Church) prepared the way for the Holocaust of the Jews of Yugoslavia .

Greece

In 1941 March German forces helping the Italians broke Greek resistance. The British were evacuated from Greece. Italy occupied most of

the Greek territory, while the Germans occupied Macedonia and eastern Thrace. Bulgaria, having provided land transit for the German troops into Greece, was awarded western Thrace. In May 1941,⁹⁰ the Germans invaded the island of Crete and drove the British out.

The Germans installed a puppet prime minister whose jurisdiction included both the German and Italian zones. Germany itself maintained a military government in Greece, with Max Metren,⁹¹ counselor to the military governor, in charge of civilian affairs.

In September 1943, after Marshall Badoglio's government in Italy surrendered to the invading Allied forces,⁹² German troops occupied Italian held Greece and extended their military rule over all of Greece. In October 1944, British troops having landed in Greece, worked with the Greek resistance movement to drive out the retreating Germans. Under Russian pressure, Bulgaria relinquished Thracian Greece.

The Jewish population in prewar Greece was close to 76,000, 0.9 of the total population. During the period of stormy strife of the Greek republic(1924-1935) anti-Semitism - propaganda and violence- became commonplace.

In July 1942, Jews were made liable for forced labor ; about ten thousand were rounded up for forced-labor battalions. The terrible conditions in malaria-infested swamps, which caused high mortality among the internees (12 percent), prompted the Jewish community to offer to exempt the Jews for ransom.⁹³ After lengthy negotiations, Merten, the German officer in charge of the civilian affairs, agreed to accept 2.5 billion drachmas(then about \$ 100,000).⁹⁴ At the same time, Jewish property and Jewish businesses were being despoiled and confiscated.

In February 1943, the notorious Dieter Wisliceny, Eichmann's deputy, arrived in Salonika to set in motion the machinery for deportations.

The Jews were ordered to wear Star of David badges and move into ghettos, which were in fact segregated areas. Deportations began in March 1943 from Salonika and Thrace. By mid-May some 45,000 Jews from Salonika had been deported.⁹⁵

At the end of September 1943, when all Greece came under German military rule, SS General Jurgen Stroop took over the SS command in Athens. On October 3, 1943, he issued general anti-Jewish regulations, defining the Jews and ordering them to register. Jews who did not report within five days would be shot. Early in 1944 the deportations of Jews from Athens began⁹⁶ and the Germans began to round up the Jews on the islands of Corfu, Crete, Rhodes, and elsewhere. *Among the perpetrators of the Holocaust in Greece, was the Nazi War criminal, Kurt Waldheim, who later on became Secretary General of the United Nations and President of Austria.*

Over sixty thousand Greek Jews were annihilated, most having been deported to Auschwitz.⁹⁷

By the end of the " Good Old Days" the world of Plato and Aristotle, Socrates and Pericles, was overtaken by barbarism, mass killings, death camps, gas chambers; and the world of the Jewish community and of six million human beings, six million individuals, men, women and children, vanished for eternity.

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CHAPTER 8

"Only I Never Saw a Butterfly Again..."

The Butterfly₁

The last, the very last
So richly, brightly, dazingly yellow
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
against a white stone...

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly ' way up high
It went away I am sure because it wished to
kiss the world good bye.

For seven weeks I've lived here,
Penned up inside this ghetto
But I have found my people here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut candles in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live here,
In the ghetto.

Pavel Friedman 4.6.1942

Homesick₂

I've lived in the ghetto here more than a year,
In Terezin, in the black town now,
And when I remember my old home so dear,
I can love it more that I did, somehow.

Ah, home, home,
 Why did they tear me away?
 Here the weak die easy as a feather
 And when they die, they die forever.

I'd like to go back home again,
 It makes me think of sweet spring flowers,
 Before, when I used to live at home,
 It never seemed so dear and fair.

I remember now those golden days...
 But maybe I'll be going there soon again.

People walk along the street,
 You see at once on each you meet
 That there's a ghetto here
 A place of evil and fear.
 There 's little to eat and much to want.
 Where bit by bit, it's horror to live.
 But no one must give up !
 The world turns and times change.

Yet we all hope the time will come
 When we'll go home again.
 Now I know how dear it is
 And often I remember it.

Anonymous 9.3.1943

The Garden

A little garden,
 Fragrant and full of roses.
 The path is narrow
 And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
 Like the growing blossom.
 When the blossom comes to bloom,
 The little boy will be no more.

Franta Bass

The heart cries out. 1,500,000 Jewish children were killed by the Nazis.
 Before they were killed they wrote poems.

Listen to Alena Synkova who perished in Theresienstadt. She was one
 of 15,000 children who passed through this camp:

I'd Like to Go Alone 4

I'd like to go away alone
 Where there other, nicer people,
 Somewhere into the far unknown,
 There, where no one kills another.

Maybe more of us.
 A thousand strong,
 Will reach this goal
 Before too long.

Fifteen thousand children !
 Fifteen thousand children !

How could the Nazis do this ? How could anybody ?

And to get the true dimension of the unspeakable bestiality, the number
 has to be multiplied by 100- 1,500.000 children among the Six Million !

Who can calculate the arithmetic of horror, the terror, the indescribable
 pain, the incalculable loss? 5

When the SS physicians in Auschwitz were determining which children

would live and which would die, they hung a bar at certain height. The children who were too short to reach the bar were considered unfit to work and were immediately sent to the crematorium. Realizing this, small children tried to stand as possible in order to be in a group that was to live-for a while longer.⁶

In the "Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto," the famous historian of the Ghetto, Emanuel Ringelblum, wrote in 1941 : " People cover dead bodies of frozen children with handsome posters designed for Children's Month bearing the legend " Our Children must Live- A Child is the Holiest Thing." ⁷

In another entry, Ringelblum tells about a child who tried to collect an extra lunch at a public " soup kitchen." When discovered, the child begged with tears in his eyes to be allowed to have two lunches, because he did not want to like his little sister.⁸

Gisella Perl was a Hungarian physician incarcerated in Auschwitz. Dr. Mengele gave Dr. Perl instructions that all pregnancies must be reported to him. He said that pregnant women would be sent another camp for better nutrition. But Dr. Perl discovered that they were being taken to be used as guinea pigs in Mengele's sadistic experiments.

Dr. Perl decided that "never again would there be a pregnant woman in Auschwitz."⁹ Night and after night Dr. Perl performed abortions on the dirty floor using her hands. " Hundreds of times I did this. No one can ever know what it means to destroy these babies. But I must do it, or both mother and child will be so cruelly treated by Mengele." ¹⁰

Adam Cherniakow, who served nearly three years as chairman of the Warsaw *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) left the most important diary of the Holocaust. In an entry dated June 14, 1942. Czerniakow writes about hungry children, street children, beggars, naked and barefoot skeletons. " I commanded that the children be brought... These 8 -year-old citizens

conversed with me like adults, I am ashamed to admit that it's been long since I cried so... Cursed are those among us who can eat and drink and forget these children." ¹¹

Another entry- July 22, 1941: " In front of 16 Krochmala Street... I was shown the corpse of a child in an advanced state of decay. On the basis of subsequent investigation it was established that the body had been left behind on its mother, and the child was 6 years old....It was ascertained that the child died of hunger..." ¹²

Hitler's war against the Jewish children was the worst, the most vicious, and the most merciless in recorded history. ¹³ Hitler's Germany made the Jewish child its principal target. In condemning the Jewish children to death, Hitler and the Nazis wanted to deprive the Jewish people of a future.

Killing Jewish children was a joy for many. On October 30, 1941 massacres had been carried out by German SS men and the Lithuanian police in the Kovno area. On return from the killing, one of the Lithuanians "boasted"- as it was later on recalled by a survivor ¹⁴ -" that he dragged small children by the hair, stabbing them with the edge of his bayonet, and throwing them half alive into pits." The smallest children " he just threw into the pit alive, because to kill them first is to much work." ¹⁵

One of the survivors of this massacre was a twelve year old boy. Here is his story - a tragic hellish nightmare as recalled by a survivor :

The boy said that people were to strip and march in groups of one hundred to the edge of a freshly dug pit. The guards fired on each group as they stepped forward.

Some were only wounded but they too fell into the deep pits and were covered with a layer of earth.

The boy was with his mother, was covered by her, and so not hit

[by bullets.] The boy and his mother were destined to be the second layer of bodies from the top of the grave.

His mother embraced him and covered him. She bent forward and fell into the pit with him so that he was not suffocated by the layer of earth poured on top.

When it was dark the boy slowly moved to the edge of the pit. With great effort he pushed away the bodies around him and crawled out.

There he was able to see that the earth which covered the pit was moving, meaning that many others were still alive in the pit but were unable to save themselves.

Under darkness he escaped back to the ghetto and was later smuggled out. No one knows if he is alive today."¹⁶

With all probability the boy is among the 1,500,000 million children who were massacred and perished.

Killing Jewish Children

Routine for the Nazis

The murder of Jewish children, for the Nazis, was a routine procedure. Children who survived have traumatic memories: " I am condemned to walk on earth for all my days with a stench of burning flesh in my nostrils."¹⁷

Here is a report of a German Lieutenant-Colonel to his Field Marshall in the Army:

On August 21, 1941 at about 16.00 hours the two divisional chaplains reported to me that some ninety Jewish children had been locked up in a house in the town, Byela Tserkov, for twenty four hours without food or water. The conditions were intolerable, they told me, and an attempt to induce the *Ortskommandant* to intervene had not met with success.

Upon receiving this report I went to the house...From the road one could see the house and hear children whimpering...A few armed Ukrainians were standing about in the yard. There were children on the window -sills, but the windows were not open. On the landing of the first floor stood an Ukrainian guard...In the three innerconnecting rooms there was a further Ukrainian guard armed with a rifle. There were about ninety children and several women crammed into the rooms. A woman was cleaning up in the farthestmost room, which contained almost only babies. The other rooms were unbearably filthy, half-naked children were covered with flies. Almost all the children were crying or whimpering. The stink was unbearable...

Meanwhile an *Oberscharfuhrer* from the SD entered the house. I asked what was going to happen to these children. He informed me that the children's relatives had been shot and the children were also to be eliminated...18

Children Were the Nazis' First Victims

The First Ones 19

They, the children of Israel, were the first in doom and disaster;
most of them without father and mother
were consumed by frost, starvation and lice;
holy messiahs sanctified in pain....
Say then, how have these lambs sinned?
Why in days of doom are they the first victims of wickedness,
the first in the trap of evil are they!

The first were they detained for death,
the first into the wagons of slaughter;
they were thrown into the wagons, the huge wagons,
like heaps of refuse, like the ashes of the earth--
and they transported them,
killed them

without remnant or remembrance...
 The best of my children were all wiped out !
 Oh woe unto me--
 Doom and Desolation!

An Extract from "Lament of the Martyred Jewish People"
 by Yitzhak Katznelson

The world of children was collapsing around them even before the Holocaust. Jewish children were expelled from public schools. In their Jewish schools, the goal was "to educate the pupils as human beings possessing work skills as well as Jewish knowledge, so that they will be able to contend with the difficult life which lies ahead of them"²⁰ Could a Jewish educator- or should he or she- have prepared his or her pupils also for their encounter with death?

A pupil of the Jewish high school in Cracow accused her former instructors in a poem entitled, To The Teachers:²¹

You taught us to strive for a life of ideals,
 You exhorted through verses and poems
 To soar on the wings of enthusiasm,
 To unravel life innermost's secrets.

You taught us to love the magic of words,
 To go into raptures. weeping with awe,
 To press onward and search unrelentingly
 For the truth and cosmos unrevealed.

You enchanted our spirits with "humanist" phrases,
 You taught us to worship the glory of genius.
 For this I am now bowed with suffering,
 I face the cruel world all helpless and lost.

We should have been taught to spring from a crouch.
 To seize hold of neck with an iron-strong grip,
 To strike at the forehead with merciless fist
 Until lifeless he crumples and falls !

You should have taught us to shriek till we're heard,
 How to crash through a gate that is cracked,
 How to kill to avoid getting killed
 And get used to the glitter of blood.

O, erudite teachers, men of vast knowledge !
 Did you really and truly did not know
 That the earth has no place for a humanist ?
 Why did you plant yearning in our hearts ?

(Hela Bumengraber --to Professor Julius Feldhorn)

The Nazi Universe Had No Place for Jewish Children

It is difficult to establish the number of children who were killed in Auschwitz. At the Nuremberg Trials, witnesses gave approximate numbers. Some estimated that a million children under sixteen were killed.²² Others based their estimates on prams left in front of the crematoria. Some witnesses reported also that blood was taken from children recovering from typhoid to provide immunization for the Reich army.²³

On November 26, 1944, Himmler, foreseeing defeat and concerned for his own survival, gave the order to shut down the crematoria.²⁴ Frantic efforts to destroy evidence ensued, to dismantle the machinery of death. Potential witnesses, including children, were shot or taken away on death marches. On January 27, 1945, the day Auschwitz was liberated by the Russian soldiers, approximately three hundred children were found, barley

alive. Some children have blue numbers tattooed on their arms.²⁵

These children survived the hell of Auschwitz. Almost a million and half other children were not so fortunate.

The terrible fate of children in Auschwitz and in many other death camps can be learned ,among others, from an exchange between a Prosecutor (Smirnov) and a Witness(S.Smaglewska) before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg in 1946:

Prosecutor: Did you yourself see the children sent to the gas chambers?

Witness: I used to work very close to the rail way lines leading to the crematoria. ...I could watch what happened to the convoys...I saw a lots of children with Jewish people who were brought to the Camp. Some families have several children. The Court is aware, no doubt, that a selection was made before the people were sent to the crematorium.

Prosecutor: The selection was made by doctors ?

Witness: Not always; sometimes it was done by SS men.

Prosecutor: But there were doctors too ?

Witness: Yes. At the time when these selections were made, only a few of the young and healthy Jewish were admitted to the camp. Women carrying children were sent with them to the crematorium. The children were then torn from the parents outside the crematorium and sent to the gas chambers separately. When the extermination of the Jews in the gas chambers was at its height, orders were issued that the children were to be thrown straight into the crematorium furnaces, or into a pit near the crematorium, without being gassed first.

Prosecutor: How am I to understand this ? Did they throw them into the fire alive, or did they kill them first ?

Witness: They threw them in alive. Their screams could be

heard at the camp. It is difficult to say how many children were destroyed in this way.

Prosecutor: Why did they do this ?

Witness: It is difficult to say. We don't know whether they wanted to economize on gas, or it was because there was not enough room in the gas chambers. I should like to add that it is impossible to say exactly how many of these people- Jewish people, for instance- were sent straight to the crematoria. They were not registered or tattooed, and often they were not counted. Those of us prisoners who tried to keep a check on the number of children gassed had no means of judging except by the number of prams brought into the store-room. Sometimes there were a hundred, sometimes even as many as thousands.²⁶

A report on the quantity of old garments collected from Birkenau and the camps in the Lublin area includes 97,000 sets of men's old clothing, 76,000 sets of women's 'old clothing', 132,000 men's shirts, 155,000 women's coats, 3,000 kilograms(2200 lbs..) of women's hair. The women's hair filled a whole freight car.²⁷

Children's items on the list included 15,000 overcoats and 11,000 boy's jackets, as well as 9,000 girls' dresses, and 22,000 pairs of children's shoes. Also listed were 135,000 handkerchiefs and 100,000 hand towels. All were to be distributed, some of them to the Reich Youth Leadership.²⁸

The Tragedy of Children in Thereziednstadt

Tragic conditions also prevailed in the ghetto of the " privileged", Theresienstadt. In this "paradise" for Jews births were forbidden, and women discovered by German authorities to have given birth were subject to immediate expulsion to the East- death. Yet 207 children were born in

Theresienstadt, 25 of whom survived. Births were disguised by registering the newborn in place of a child that had died.²⁹

One hundred fifty thousand people passed through Terezin, and were funneled east to death camps, mostly Auschwitz, starting in 1942. Of these, fifteen thousand were children. " Shall I keep my child with me in the adult quarters ? Or shall I put the child into the nursery run by inmates, freeing myself for labor, consequent rations, and survival ? And when my name appears on a transport list, shall I take my child with me if his/her name does not appear ?" These were the life-and-death questions with which parents wrestled.³⁰

Some children arrived in Terezin without parents, packed into trains manned by Reichsbahn(national railroad) civil servants, who processed children as readily as freight. The SS with whom they contracted this work was charged only half-fare for children, and those under two went free of charge, as usual.³¹ *What an efficiency and order!!!*

Here is how an eyewitness described the arrival of a large children's transport:

... Transport of children from many different countries came to Theresienstadt. So on August 24, 1943, 1260 children. They were frightened and speechless, many barefoot, all in a sorry state and half starved.... These children had come from Bialystok and had seen everything that Jews could suffer. They were taken immediately in groups to a disinfection bath where they made terrible scenes. These children knew of gas chambers and would not set foot in the bath area. They screamed desperately "no, no, not gas." They would not obey the SS men. Consequently they were pushed in by force. They cried and clung to each other. We who saw this were beside ourselves but we had been forbidden to speak to them under threat of death... Before their departure from Bialystok they were lined up in a place and divided into three groups: men, women and

children up to age of 14. Fathers, mothers, and older brothers were then shot before their eyes.³²

Fifty-eight thousand people died in Terezin. Fifteen thousand children had passed through the Terezin death funnel. Only one hundred survived.

The Vanished World

The vanished world of the children was the cradle of a most creative Jewish life in Europe. The world of European Jewry was destroyed in the Holocaust, not only in terms of numbers and material aspects; Jewish creativity and Jewish civilization in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe came to a tragic end. The Holocaust not only meant the destruction of European Jewry of more than 6 million(in fact 6.5 million) but also the annihilation of thousands of Jewish communities, some of them thousand years old; of tens of thousands of cultural and social institutions; thousands of synagogues and seminaries, schools and orphanages, academies and hospitals and the uprooting of Jewish life from countries, where, for the most part, Jews had lived for a thousand or more years..

The Holocaust- The Terrible Act of Destruction

All the descriptions of destructions in Lamentations seem pale in comparison to this terrible act of destruction, aside , perhaps, for one sentence, " The Lord hath swallowed up unsparingly all the inhabitants and habitations of Jacob", because the Holocaust embraced Jews in 22 countries : In Germany and Austria, Poland and Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Russia

and Ukraine, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, Greece, France and Italy, Belgium Holland and Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway and Finland. There was scarcely a community in these countries that escaped completely ; there was no one community that the Nazis and their collaborators did not reach.

For centuries foes and friends alike out of envy, ridicule or admiration, used to compare the Jewish people to a tree that has its branches spread out all over the world. This was true to a certain degree. The trunk of this tree, magnificently high, was in Eastern Europe. Its roots were so deep that they could supply the life nectar to all its branches. Up to the beginning of World War II, Eastern European Jewry was kind a reservoir, able to service Jewish communities on all five continents.³³

Jews in Western Europe held high positions in government, in the world of science, in education; just to mention Albert Einstein, whom many consider the greatest scientist ever, Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychiatry, Martin Buber, the great theologian, but the nerve center of Jewish cultural life was Eastern Europe.

Famous academies, such as Telz, Slobotke, Wolozhin, Lublin and Brisk provided spiritual leadership where it was needed. A literature in two languages, Hebrew and Yiddish, enriched libraries all over the world. Yiddish theater on the highest level from the serious dramatic Vilna Troup to the light style of Ararat of Warsaw; many publishing houses, an education system both in Hebrew and Yiddish from kindergarten to high school; teachers' seminaries, competitive athletic organizations, orchestras, choirs... Poland alone had at one time 30 daily Jewish newspapers, plus 5 in the Polish language and over 100 different Jewish periodicals. Tlomacka 13 in Warsaw was the home of Jewish intelligentsia ; a universal gathering place for writers, poets, journalists, educators and artists, including the young Isaac Basevich

Singer, who continued to write in Yiddish in the United States and won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Vilna in Lithuania prouided itself as " The Jerusalem of Lita." Jews founded important research institutions. A Jewish labor movement, the Bund, earned the respect of trade unions all over the world.

It was Eastern Europe where the movements of Hassidism(The Lubavitcher Movement and The Szatmar Movement are now well known in the United States) and Jewish Enlightenment were born. Modern Zionism was founded by Dr. Theodor Herzl, who was born in Budapest, and whose parents had connections with famous rabbis . The first pioneers who went to Holy Land to dry the swamps and to restore the Land of "Milk and Honey" of the Bible from centuries of neglect came from Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Rumania. The first president of Israel, Dr. Chaim Weizman, and the first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, were Eastern European Jews.

The Tragedy of the Jews of Poland

A picture of Polish Jewry can be applied with some varieties to other countries and communities too. Polish Jewry in 1939 numbered 3,300.000. Eighty five percent were to be killed by the Nazis.³⁴

After World War I, the newly established state of Poland had a Jewish community of 3,300.000, the largest and one of the oldest in Europe and the second largest in the world. It was organized as a community (*Kehillah*), with power of owning all communal property, such as synagogues, cemeteries, hospitals, and the like, and with authority to direct communal educational religious and social-cultural institutions. Each town, large and small, was represented on a Council which was elected by direct, secret ballot. The

various organizations found their interests reflected in the bodies of the *Kehillah*(community) through proportional representation.

The greatest achievement of Polish Jewry was its educational system maintained at its own cost. Different Jewish ideological and religious groups maintained their respective types of schools, each with its own language of instruction in Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, or bilingual. Of the total Jewish school population of 425,000 some 340,000 attended these schools.³⁵ The Jewish community also maintained teacher training schools, rabbinical academies, trade schools and other cultural institutions, such as museums, libraries, and adult study courses.

Jewish cultural life of a religious and secular character flourished in Poland. There was a large output of books, magazines, dailies, and other publications. In higher institutions of learning such as the famous *Yeshivoth* (Academies) of Lublin and Mir, the Yiddish Scientific Institute-YIVO (in Vilna and now in New York), the Institute of Science of Judaism (in Warsaw), scholars produced many volumes on Jewish subjects and trained students who later spread Jewish knowledge throughout the world. In the Jewish museums of Warsaw, Vilna, and Cracow the treasures of the past as well as creations of such contemporary artists as Marc Chagall and Arthur Syk could be found. A vibrant religious life, centering around thousands of synagogues, courts of rabbis, and individual homes, endowed the Jews with strength and courage to live a traditional Jewish life. The Sabbath and the holidays, all rites and customs were observed in an atmosphere that glowed with joy and piety.

Jewish communal life also abounded with a variety of political, social, philanthropic and mutual aid organizations and institutions which helped the Jew to cope with the complexity of problems calling for action. There were organizations aiming to restore the Jewish individual human rights and

freedom as well as collective autonomy, and to defend these rights along political lines. Agencies were established for health work as well as a net of philanthropic institutions and youth organizations, most of them aiming at a strong, living Jewish people.

Jews also contributed their full measure to the general culture of Poland in science, art, literature and music. Among others, Julian Tuwim was considered the foremost contemporary poet of the Polish language, Bruno Winawer was prominent in literature, Bronislaw Huberman [later on founder of the Israeli Philharmonic with Arturo Toscanini] in music, and Szymon Ashkenazi in historiography.³⁶

The world of Polish Jewry is no more.

The Vanished World of Piety and Perseverance of the Jews of the Carpathians

Another world which is no more is the universe of Elie Wiesel and of the author. Buried now under the ashes is the Jewish universe of the Carpathians. The Jews of the Carpathian mountains were part of the Hungarian Kingdom and Jews are recorded in Bereg county (including Beregszasz, the birthplace of the author) from the middle of the 17th century. Other counties were Ung, Ugocsa and Maramaros (which included Sziget of Wiesel.) After World War I, the Carpathian became part of Czechoslovakia and Rumania, but were returned to Hungary in 1939. Almost of all Jews of the Carpathians perished in the Holocaust, among them Irene Itzkovics-Steinberger, the 48-year-old mother of the author, and almost the entire Jewish community of Beregszasz.

The Carpathian communities were captivating. With their rabbis and

their poets, their sages and their dreamers, they surpassed in vigor, in creative imagination, in hope as well, all that is found, in a society at first in process of formation, and afterwards, destruction.³⁷ In barely two centuries, this mountainous region had produced a highly colorful society, touching and fascinating, throbbing with life and death, culture and beauty so much so that one believed it would last forever. It did not last forever; it vanished forever.

The Holocaust-

The Murder of 6,000.000 Jews,
1,500.000 Children

The Holocaust was the destruction of European Jewry, but the 6,000.000 Jews who were massacred by the Nazis and their collaborators were 6,000.000 individual human beings. This dimension of the Holocaust is an everlasting trauma.

The Tragedy of Anne Frank-

13 Years Old

Murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators was Anne Frank, a young, beautiful, talented 13 year old girl in Holland, (died in Bergen-Belsen) who writes in her diary:

For in its innermost depths youth is lonelier than old age.' I read this saying in some book and I've always remembered it, and found it to be true. Is it true that grown-ups have a more difficult time here than we do? No. I know it is not. Older people have formed their opinions about everything, and don't waver before they act. It is twice as hard for our young ones to

hold our ground, and maintain our opinions, in a time when all ideals are being shattered and destroyed when people are showing their worst side, and do not know whether to believe in truth and right and God.

It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet, I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting on confusion, misery and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too. I can feel the suffering of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again.³⁸

The Tragedy of Eva Heyman- 13 Years Old

Eva Heyman was another young girl who left a diary. She wrote her diary from February 13, 1944- the day she became thirteen years old- till May 30, 1944, three days before she was deported to Auschwitz. Eva Heyman grew up in a bourgeois family in Nagyvarad, Rumania, which was returned in 1940 to Hungary. On March 19, 1944 the Germans took control of the city. Her family had long been removed from the Jewish way of life and Jewish values. But this did not spare them the fate Hitler had in store for them and their fellow Jews in the period of the Holocaust.³⁹

Eva's diary was found in 1945 in Nagyvarad by her mother. In the ghetto of Nagyvarad, that hell-on-earth- mother and daughter have been torn asunder by human wickedness and cruelty. The mother was transported to Bergen-Belsen, wherefrom it was her lot to be sent to Switzerland and to

safety, whereas the daughter died on October 17, 1944 in Auschwitz. *How can one share in this trauma of a mother whose child was murdered by the Nazis?*

It is told by the mother" that ever since a friend of her daughter was taken away in 1941, as it were right from 'creamed strawberries', Eva Heyman had changed in a peculiar manner. She became obsessed with the idea that she and all her beloved ones would some day meet with the same fate." 40

Eva reached her destiny on October 17, 1944. She arrived at Auschwitz on June 6, the very day the Allied troops landed in Europe. Like millions of Jews in Auschwitz she was spared no torment. According to testimonies of surviving eyewitnesses, her vitality did not leave her for a moment and in spite of the mental and physical agony she had to endure, her physical condition remained comparatively good. According to these testimonies, a cousin of her and a friend mentioned in her diary passed away in her arms, but her will to survive did not slacken even then. She fought with all her might to stay alive until that better world were to materialize.

"The thirteen-year old girl had fought for her life against the henchmen of the Third Reich, but the German beast was much too strong for her. For Eva that beast was personified in the creature called Mengele. Mengele need not be introduced- there is no one in the wide world who is not struck with horror at the very sound of that name. It is a disgrace to humanity that he was a physician. ...It was Mengele who picked out the hundreds of thousands of deportees, those who were to die at once and those whose fate it was to live." 41

Until October 17, Eva lived in Camp C of Auschwitz in the shadow of the heavy clouds of smoke issuing forth from the crematoria. On that day Mengele carried out his last and largest "selection" apparently in view of the

progressing allied troops. If until then Mengele directed his helpless victims towards the left or the right with a conductor's elegant movements, now he was not satisfied with the row victims lined up in front of their executioners, but he himself searched for them in possible hiding places. A good-hearted female doctor was trying to hide Eva, but Mengele found her without effort. Eva's feet were full of sore wounds. "Now look at you," Mengele shouted, "you frog, your feet are foul, reeking with pus! Up with you to the truck!" He transported his human material to the crematorium on yellow-colored trucks. Eyewitnesses told the mother that Mengele himself had pushed Eva on to the truck. Eva's thirteen-year-long life came to an end in Auschwitz, as she feared ever since 1941.⁴²

The Diary of Eva Heyman joins Anne Frank's The Diary of a Young Girl as another moving voice of one of the six million Jews who perished and speak to mankind today.

The Holocaust -

The Destruction of

6,000 Jewish Communities

Among the communities destroyed was Lida a small town near Vilna, with a Jewish population of 17,000. By spring 1942 the center of the town had been destroyed by the German Luftwaffe during the first few days of the war with the Soviet Union. The Jewish quarters were isolated from the older population by a wide dirt road.

A survivor, Dr. Michael Okunieff recalls the destruction of the Jews of Lida:

After surviving the destruction of the Vilna ghetto in 1941, I landed in Lida, Byelorussia. in the spring of 1942 I sensed

trouble in the air. Judgement day was approaching when Jews were selected for life or death. On the Sunday, before the selection nobody could leave their homes. On the dirt road I could see a group of dignitaries, mostly Byelorussians, accompanied by a Nazi officer...

The same day, news spread of a Nazi transport for resettlement. And the very next morning the ghetto was surrounded by the Byelorussian secret police and the Gestapo. Thus began the expulsion from the Collection Place, in the center of the town.

The lucky ones were sent to the left to return home. and the others to the right, about 10,000 men, women, and children.

The following is the story as told by a survivor: ' He and others were taken from the center of the city to the woods. They were brought to newly dug pits, where they were forced to disrobe and line up against the edges of the ravine. Then they were shot, group after group. executed in cold blood, mostly by drunken Byelorussians.

Just when nearly the last victims were about to be executed. A Nazi officer stopped the killing and turned to an old rabbi standing in the line, who had a beautiful white beard, and a headcovering. The Nazi officer told the rabbi to make a wish before his execution.

At this the rabbi covered himself in the religious clothing and began to chant the prayer : ' The world is full of G-d's mercy.' Soon all the remaining Jews joined in the prayer. The Nazi officer looked at his captives as if they were crazy... He thought that they will beg for mercy... His face turned red and started to scream: ' *Du Jüdische schweine* (You Jewish pig.)'... The Nazi officer started to struck over and over again with a club,...but the rabbi continued to chant the prayers... The Nazi wanted to conquer the rabbi emotionally, not only to destroy physically, to subjugate his will and instill fear. Would the rabbi take a way out, if he thought it would spare his life..

The rabbi did not respond. He did not even beg to be spared...He begged only for mercy and forgiveness from G-d, a language not understood by his tormentor...Furious the Nazi turned from his victim and screamed to the Byelorussian guards 'Fire, fire, fire!' A shower of bullets hit the rabbi, and he fell backwards into the pit, along with a dozen of others.

Then the Nazi walked to the ravine and repeatedly shot bullets into the rabbi's body, as he wanted to kill the entire culture that was 2,000 years old, a culture hated by Hitler's New Order, the Third Reich dedicated to conquest and brutality.⁴³

Lida was one of the 6,000 communities that were wiped out. In Jerusalem there is The Valley of the Destroyed Communities, a memorial for the communities that gone forever.

The Holocaust-

The Great Human Tragedy

Among the 6,000,000 Jews who were killed was the famous Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow, who had taught at Vilna, Kovno and Berlin, and who was murdered in Riga on December 8th, 1941, at the age of 81. Among other Jewish historians murdered by the Nazis was Emanuel Ringelblum, born in Buczacz, near Cracow, who survived the Warsaw ghetto revolt, but was later caught by the Gestapo and tortured and killed, at the age of 44, together with his wife and children.⁴⁴

Many thousands of doctors, medical men and scientists were also killed, among them the pharmacologist Emil Stackenheim, born in the Bohemian town of Pobezovice, who had made major contributions to preventive medicine, first as Professor at Prague, and after 1938, as a refugee in Amsterdam. In 1941, at the age of 58, he was deported to Mauthausen and

killed.⁴⁵

Charlotte Salomon was a painter. Born in Berlin, she had fled to France in 1939, at the age of 22. One of her painting bore the caption: "I cannot bear this life, I cannot bear these times." Rudolf Levy, also a painter was born in Stettin in 1875 and worked with Matisse. In the First World War, as a German soldier, he won the Iron Cross. Fleeing from Berlin to Paris in 1933 from Paris to Florence in 1940, he was deported from Italy to Auschwitz in 1943. The same year, the Munich-born painter Hermann Lisman,, who had studied in Lausanne and Rome, was deported from France to Majdanek.⁴⁶

Harry Baur, a Marseilles dock worker who became known throughout France as 'the king of the character actors' died in Berlin in 1943, after being tortured by the Gestapo. A fellow French Jew, Rene Blum, successor to Diaghilev as director of the Monte Carlo Ballet, perished in Auschwitz in 1944.⁴⁷

Many poets were also murdered, among them Mordechai Gebirtig, killed in Cracow, Samuel Jacob Imber, deported to Belzec, Yitzhak Katznelson killed at Auschwitz with one of his sons, and Miklos Radnoti, a 35-year-old Hungarian who, after more than three years in different slave labor camps, died in October 1944 on a death march from Yugoslavia to Hungary.⁴⁸

Among the hundreds of thousands of teenagers killed was the 15-year old Yitskhok Rudashevski, who recorded in his diary the day-to-day life and mood of the Vilna ghetto, and Judith Sandor, from Budapest, who survived both the death camps and the war itself, but was too weak to survive the peace, and died at Karlstad, in Sweden, in September 1945, shortly after her seventeenth birthday.⁴⁹

Janusz Korczak, writer of children's stories, educator and social worker, was murdered at Treblinka with all 200 children from his Warsaw

orphanage. He had insisted on accompanying them to the death camp. Alice Salomon, director of the children's home at La Rose, near Marseilles, also voluntarily joined her children, when they were deported to Auschwitz.⁵⁰

In all, more than 1,500,000 Jewish children were murdered by the Nazis, among them three-year old Pierre Roth, born in Mulhouse, Germany.⁵¹ Thousands of children were shot in the streets, or separated from their parents for the terrible journey to the death camps. Even the tiniest infants were brutally murdered, many of them wrenched from their mothers' arms, as both were shot, beaten to death, or gassed.

With the death of so many children, future generations were also destroyed, and the natural descent of generations to generations was unnaturally cut off. The world and the Jewish people shall never know what these million and half or more children would have made of their lives, had evil men not marked them out to die.

The Nazis' and their collaborators' aim was to blot out all the Jews and all their communities and all they represented of life, heritage and culture.

May the memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust and of their communities that were destroyed for eternity be a blessing!

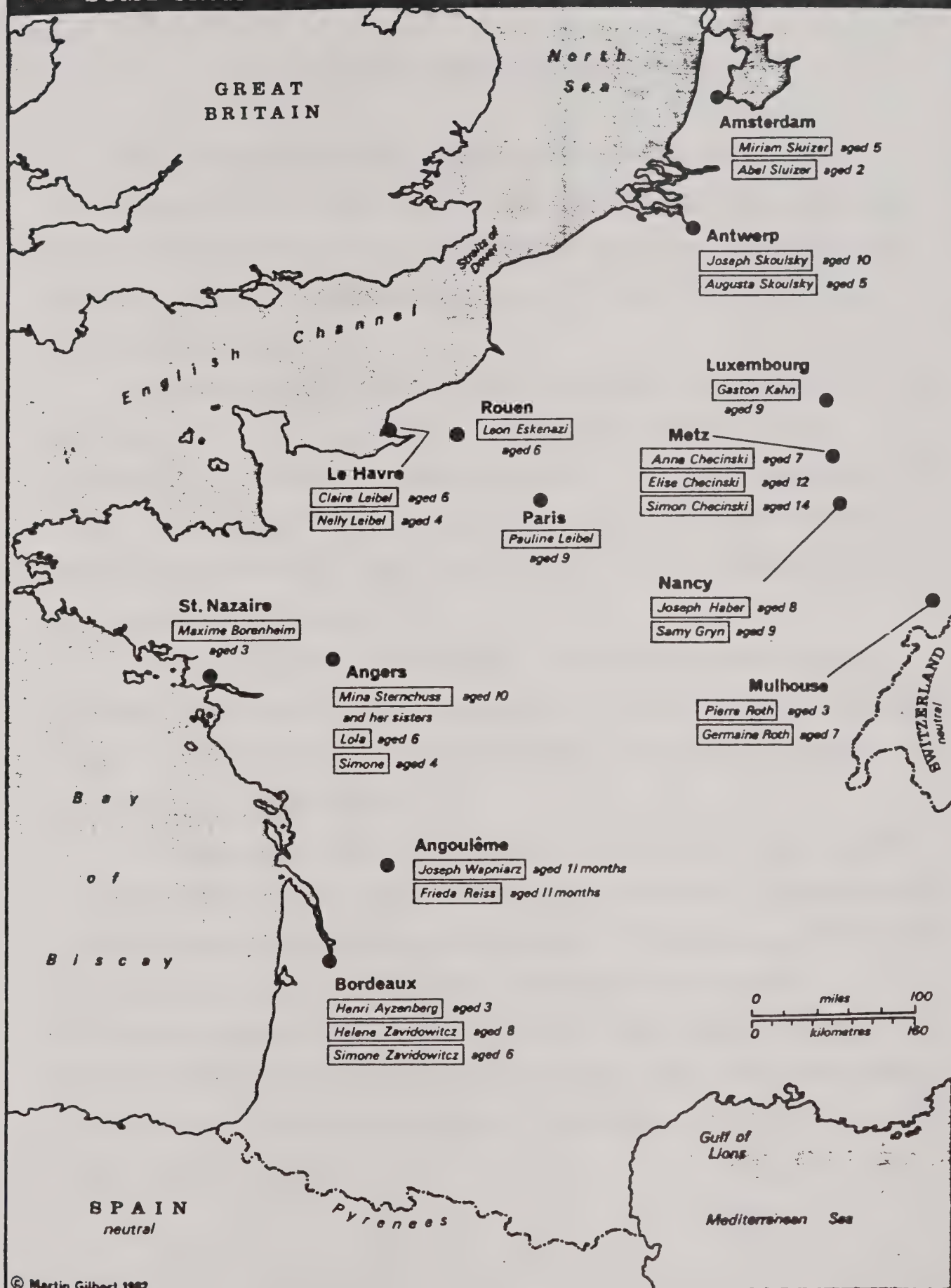
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SOME CHILDREN DEPORTED TO AUSCHWITZ, 11 FEBRUARY 1943



CHAPTER 9

Troublesome Reactions to the Holocaust

The Nazi destruction of six million Jews, the Holocaust, raises traumatic questions not only about the killers but also about the bystanders. What did the world do to stop the annihilation of the Jews? The desire and the determination of the Nazis to destroy every Jew in Europe was known. How was this challenge met?

On January 1, 1936, after two years and two months of frustration, the American James McDonald resigned as the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Jewish and others) Coming from Germany. His letter of resignation and its attached documentation filled seventy-seven printed pages. Excerpts of this material were featured by newspapers everywhere but in Germany.¹

In a restrained but devastating indictment of Nazi racial policies, McDonald summoned the nations of the world to meet the German challenge by direct political action. He called for a radical change in the League's approach to refugee problems.²

McDonald proposed to the Secretary-General of the League that the problem be solved at its source- the German government: "The developments since 1933, and in particular those following the Nuremberg legislation, call for fresh collective action in regard to the problem created by the persecutions in Germany. The moral authority of the League of Nations and State Members of the League must be directed towards a determined appeal to the German Government in the name of humanity and the principles of the public law of Europe."³

McDonald closed his letter of resignation with a prophetic note :

But convinced as I am that desperate suffering in countries adjacent to Germany, and even more terrible human calamity within the German frontiers, are inevitable unless present tendencies in the Reich are checked or reversed, I cannot remain silent... When domestic policies threaten the demoralization and exile of hundreds of thousands of human beings, consideration of diplomatic correctness must yield to those of common humanity. I should be recreant if I did not call attention to the actual situation,, and plead that the world opinion, acting through the League and its Member-States and other countries, move to avert the existing and impending tragedies.⁴

During his two years and two months as High Commissioner, McDonald had carried on a tireless search for havens for the Jews. He warned everyone who would listen that German persecution was not a temporary aberration. Just before he resigned, McDonald visited the British Foreign Office with a proposal to evacuate one hundred thousand young Jewish men and women from Germany during the next four or five years, the immigration to be financed completely by Jewish organizations.⁵

A letter was sent to Governor Herbert Lehman of New York, who forwarded it to President Roosevelt with a plea that the immigration quota of Jews from Germany be increased. Roosevelt turned the letter over to the State Department, where a reply was prepared informing Lehman that there was no Jewish quota and that a maximum of 25,957 Germans could be admitted annually to the United States without reference to their religious beliefs. The letter went to reveal that 14,202 Germans of all faiths had entered the United States from 1932 to 1935, and average of 3,550 per year.⁶ There was no reference to McDonald's proposal for the immigration of fifteen to twenty thousand young people each year, and there was no explanation of why the number admitted fell so far below the quota.

The League of Nations also failed to heed McDonald's plea that it

strengthen its role in refugee matters. The British Government refused to raise the admittance of Jews to Palestine, a country where Britain was given the Mandate to develop a Jewish homeland according to the Balfour Declaration and the League of Nations, and where the Jewish population were ready to accept refugees unrestrictedly. The British Foreign Office, yielding to Arab pressure, refused to sanction unrestricted immigration and even blocked emigration of Jews by threatening various countries on route with sanctions.

With refugees facing increased difficulties in migrating to Palestine, and large sums of money being collected on their behalf, it appeared that renewed pressure would be exerted to open the doors of the United States.

On May 15, 1936, Consul General Erhardt sent a seventeen- page message on this subject. He cautioned that American Jews might attempt to pressure the State Department to liberalize its procedures for issuing visas. Perhaps they would even try to place Jews in a new and special category "political refugees." "It is entirely possible" he wrote, "that the United States will find itself receiving nearly the full quota of 25,000 German Jews yearly, by 1937."⁷

There were administrative and bureaucratic regulations emanating from the State Department and implemented by local consuls to put obstacles to Jewish immigration to the United States.

Did the World Know
of the Butchery
of the Nazis?

The events of 1938, which foreshadowed mass murder, were widely publicized. They made headlines day after day in the United States and Great

Britain, were described on the radio and filled the pages of mass magazines.

The German annexation of Austria in March 1938 triggered the most savage anti-Semitism since the rise of Hitler. 200,000 Jews of Austria (180,000 of whom lived in Vienna) were subjected to torments which made the persecution in Germany seem moderate. The following is a brief excerpt from the New York Times :

March 16...Adolf Hitler left behind him in Austria an anti-Semitism that is blossoming far more rapidly than ever it did in Germany. This afternoon the Jewish quarter of Leopoldstadt was invaded by triumphant crowds that called families from their houses and forced them to kneel and try to scrub from pavements slogans...This humiliation was carried out under the supervision of Storm troopers wearing swastika armlets. The crowds were composed...of some of the worst elements of the population, assembled to jeer at the Jews, and shouting, 'Perish Jewry!' 'Out with the Jews!'

The world press reported that suicides among Jews in Vienna had risen to two hundred daily and that Austria had closed the frontiers to her Jewish citizens. Italy, Switzerland and Chechoslovakia sealed their own borders and thus doublelocked the gates of their neighbor. "The rape of Austria" as Churchill later characterized it, was only one storm signal. The Japanese, proclaimed allies of the Nazis, were driving deep into China while Italy and Germany were testing their weapons alongside the Fascist forces of Francisco Franco, in revolt against the legitimate government in Spain.

The Austrian disaster dominated the daily newspapers of every American family, as well as the classified dispatches that were circulated in the State Department and the White House. Roosevelt was very careful not to challenge the Neutrality Law of the United States, which first was passed by Congress in 1935, and subsequently renewed. Roosevelt was hesitant to take action, however, neither he nor his Administration could ignore the Austrian

disaster.¹⁰

The Evian Conference-
the Failed Test
of Civilization

On March 22, 1938, ten days after the first German troops had marched into Austria, Roosevelt invited thirty-two governments to join in a co-operative effort to aid the emigration of political refugees from Germany and Austria. They included twenty Latin American republics, plus Great Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, The Netherlands, Denmark, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The invitation specified that "no country would be expected or asked to receive greater number of emigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation",¹¹ but emphasized that freedom loving nations must work together to solve the tragic problem.

On May 12, France approved of Evian-les-Bains as the site of the refugee conference. Among the thirty-two nations invited Italy and South Africa had declined, but the latter was sending an observer.

The challenge of Evian was most eloquently described by Anne O'Hare McCormick, columnist of the New York Times. Two days before the conference opened, she wrote:¹²

It is heartbreaking to think of the queues of desperate human beings around our consulate in Vienna and other cities waiting in suspense for what happens in Evian. But the question they underline is not simply humanitarian. It is not a question of how many unemployed this country can safely add to its unemployed millions. It is a test of civilization... Can America live with itself if it lets Germany get away with this policy of extermination,

allows the fanaticism of one man to triumph over reason, refuse to take up this gage of battle against barbarism?

This was the response of the free world to the challenge of Evian:

Australia, with vast, unpopulated areas, announced "As we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one."¹³ New Zealand was unwilling to lift its restrictions. The British Colonial empire, reported Sir John Shuckburgh, contained no territory suitable to large scale settlement of Jewish refugees. Canada wanted at this stage(later on it declared that even 'one Jew is too much') only agricultural migrants and none others. The same was true of Colombia, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Peru was particularly opposed to the immigration of doctors and lawyers lest such an intellectual proletariat upset the unbridled power of its upper class. The Peruvian delegate pointedly remarked that the United States has given his country an example of "caution and wisdom" by its own immigration restrictions.¹⁴

France stressed that it had reached its saturation point.

Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama issued a joint statement saying that they could accept no "traders or intellectuals."¹⁵

Argentina, with a population of one-tenth that of the United States, reported that it had welcomed almost as many refugees as the United States and hence could not be counted on for large-scale immigration.

Holland offered temporary sojourn. Denmark, so densely populated that its own citizens were forced to emigrate, had already taken in a disproportionately large number of German exiles. Within its narrow limits it will continue to do so.

The United States with its tradition of asylum, its vast land mass and its unlimited resources, agreed for the first time, to accept its full, legal quota of 23,370 immigrants annually from Germany and Austria.¹⁶ That was the

major American concession made at Evian.

Myron Taylor, the American representative, also sent a draft on a new approach to Secretary of State Hull, paragraph five of which stipulated :

The new urgency created by the Austrian development demands a fresh approach to the German Government in an effort to arrange more favorable conditions of migration than now exist. The existing terms of reference of the League's High Commissioner do not permit an approach to the German Government. A fresh approach under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Conference meeting at Evian should be attempted in order to change the intolerable situation in which increased numbers of refugees now find themselves.¹⁷

Secretary Hull wired back : " Paragraph five to be used guardedly and only orally since we do not wish to appear to assume responsibility for making an approach to the German government. " ¹⁸

The participants in the Evian Conference established the Intergovernmental Committee of Refugees, with permanent headquarters in London. The new organization would be independent of, but would cooperate with, the League. Unfortunately, its leadership would consist of the same personalities who dominated the Evian meeting. They would accomplish just as little. ¹⁹

The Reaction to Evian

The Danziger Vorposten, aware that no new gates had been opened to the Jews, commented :²⁰ "We see that one likes to pity the Jews as long as can use this pity for a wicked agitation against Germany, but that no state is prepared to fight the cultural disgrace of central Europe by accepting a few thousand Jews. Thus the conference serves to justify Germany's policy

against Jewry." The Nationalsozialistische Parteikorrespondenz stated that Evian had revealed "the danger which world Jewry constitutes."²¹

To most observers, the Evian Conference had accomplished too little, but to the medical professions of Great Britain and the United States it appeared to have accomplished too much.²² Organized medicine called in both countries to curtail the immigration of doctors. When Germany's leading Jewish physician applied for quotas, they were told that the German quota was filled for the next two to three years.²³

Evian Gives Green Light
for the Nazis
for the "Final Solution"

The Evian Conference basically gave the green light for the Nazis to move towards the "Final Solution." The world really did not care. Following the Evian Conference only the Dominican Republic agreed to the placement of several hundred refugees to establish a small Jewish colony, a far cry from the hundred thousand which the Dominican government had promised to welcome.²⁴

"Suffer Little Children..."
American Death Sentence
for 20,000 children

Early in 1939, a campaign was launched in the United States to create a temporary haven for twenty thousand German children. The lead had already been taken by several countries; The Netherlands had reacted to the Kristallnacht by welcoming seventeen hundred German Jewish children, and

overcrowded Belgium admitted several hundred more. But the most dramatic response was that of Great Britain, which opened its crowded island to more than nine thousand children. On January 9 a delegation of Roman Catholic and Protestant clergymen presented a petition to the White House calling upon the United States to open its doors to German children:²⁵

"Working within and under the laws of Congress, through special enactment if necessary, the nation can offer a sanctuary to a part of these children by united expression of its will to help."²⁶

Senator Robert F. Wagner, of New York, attempting to implement the clergymen's proposal, introduced a resolution in the Senate, and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts offered an identical resolution in the House of Representatives. Known as the Wagner-Rogers Bill, it proposed that a maximum of ten thousand children under the age of fourteen be admitted in 1939 and a similar number in 1940.²⁷ Their entry would be considered a part and in addition to the regular German quota. They would be adopted temporarily by American families, with costs and responsibilities assumed by reputable individuals and organizations. The children would not be permitted to work, thus avoiding labor union charges of unfair competition, and they would be reunited with their parents as soon as safe living conditions were re-established.

The migration of the children would be supervised by the American Friends Service Committee. The Quakers worked out the complex details of moving twenty thousand children to the United States. Within days after the plan was announced, four thousand families of all faith had offered to adopt the children.²⁸ Newspapers throughout the nation reported hundreds of telephone and mail inquiries from interested citizens.²⁹

Eddie Cantor, the popular comedian and singer, who created the March of Dimes for President Roosevelt's favorite cause, The National

Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, sent an emotional letter to presidential secretary Marvin McIntyre:³⁰ " My dear Marvin for generations to come if these boys and girls were permitted entry into this country, they would look upon our leader as saint- they would bless the name of Franklin D.

Roosevelt. . . " Mc Intyre replied: " There is a general feeling, I believe, even among those who are most sympathetic toward the situation in which so many thousands of persons find themselves abroad, that it would be *inadvisable* (authors' emphasis) to raise the question of increasing quotas and radical changes in our immigration laws during the present Congress. There is a very real feeling that if this question is too prominently raised in the Congress during the present session we might get more restrictive rather than more liberal immigration laws and practices. "

Roosevelt feared the antagonism of Congress, for at that very moment the President was seeking half a billion dollars from an isolationist Congress to expand the Air Corps and to construct naval bases. The President's priority clearly went to defense. Eleanor Roosevelt, however, strongly supported the Wagner-Rogers legislation.

On January, Hitler made his infamous speech : " Today I wish to be prophet once more. Should international Jewry, inside and outside Europe, succeed once more in plunging the nations into war, the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and thought it the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe. " ³¹

On March 15, encouraged by the Franco-British surrender at Munich, Hitler dismembered Czechoslovakia. In the process he added more than three hundred thousand Jews to those already his domination. There were other changes too: Slovakia was sliced from the former Czechoslovak Republic and became an independent state under the leadership of the anti-Semitic priest Monsignor Josef Tiso. Carpatho-Ukraine was given to Hungary. In the

former Czechoslovakia hell was created for the Jews.

The first of the two congressional hearings on the proposal to admit twenty thousand children on April 1939 began under these frightening clouds.

Senator Wagner made a fervent appeal for the passage of his resolution. He reminded the committee members that the nation's leading Catholic and Protestant clergymen had signed a petition supporting it and he made a point that would be reiterated over and over : almost half of the youngsters to be admitted would *not be* Jewish.³² He stated that the admission of twenty thousand children could be of little economic consequence to a nation of 130,000.³³ He closed with the Biblical Injunction: " Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for such is the Kingdom of Heaven. " ³⁴

Former President Hoover and former presidential candidate Al Landon informed the committee of their support of the bill, as did the representatives of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.³⁵

Clarence Pickett, the Quaker, who agreed to lead the children's odyssey, asserted at the hearing that an issue more profound than that of helping German children faced the members of Congress, " That issue ", he said, " is whether the American people have lost their ability to respond to such tragic situations as this one. If it turns out that we have lost that ability, it will mean that much of the soul has gone out of America. " ³⁶

The opposition to Children's Bill was fierce.

Francis H. Kinnicutt, president of the Allied Patriotic Societies, on behalf of thirty organizations opposed the legislation. These organizations included The New York Organization of the American Legion, American Women Against Communism, Dames of the Loyal Legion, Veterans of

Foreign Wars, United Daughters of Confederacy, Daughters of the Defenders of the Republic, Society of Mayflower Descendants, Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, Lord's Day Alliance of the United States and similarly entitled groups.³⁷

Senator Robert R. Reynold of North Carolina introduced a bill abolishing all immigration to the United States for the next ten years. The American Legion supported the Reynold's bill.

Mrs. Charles Fuller Wintgers, representing a Michigan group called Young Americans, Inc., testified : " If we are going to keep this country as it is and not loose our liberty in the future, we have got to keep not only these children out of it, but the whole damned Europe." ³⁸

John B. Trevor, representing the 115 patriotic societies of the American Coalition, cited the April Issue of Fortune magazine. Respondents had been asked, " If you were a member of Congress would you vote 'yes' or 'no' on a bill to open the doors of the United States to a larger number of European refugees than now admitted under the our immigration quotas ?" The results had been overwhelming ; 83 percent had said "no", 8.3 percent had replied "Don't know" and a mere 8.7 percent had answered yes". ³⁹

The hearings before the House Committee on Immigration ended on June 1. The next day President Roosevelt received a memo from " Pa" Watson, one of his aides. Watson reported that Representative Caroline O'Day of New York had asked for an expression of Mr. Roosevelt's view on the Wagner-Rogers Bill. The President picked up a pencil and scrawled on the memo: "File No Action FDR." ⁴⁰

One July 1 The Child Refugee Bill was reported out with one modification: the twenty thousand youngsters' visas over the next two years would be issued against the German quotas, not in excess of the quota.

Senator Wagner, the German-born Catholic, was appalled by the

amendment. He realized that the twenty thousand children might become twenty thousand death warrants for the adults they would displace.

"The proposed change", he said, "would in effect convert the measure from a human proposal to help children who are in acute distress to a proposal with needlessly cruel proposals for adults in Germany who are in need of succor and are fortunate to obtain visas under the present drastic quota restrictions."⁴¹

Senator Wagner took the only course now open to him. He withdrew his legislation. The plan was dead. The Congress signed the death sentence for 20,000 children.

The "Voyage of the Damned"

Jewish Refugees

Are Unwanted

Even as the Congress and the people of the United States were debating the merits of admitting refugee children, a drama of human survival was enacted on the high seas. It was a voyage which would put up a mirror to mankind.⁴²

On May 13, 1939, the Hamburg-American Line's luxurious *St. Louis* sailed from Germany with 936 passengers.⁴³ They were bound for Havana, Cuba- 930 of them Jewish refugees, among the last to escape from the Nazis' narrowing vise. Inscribed on each passport was red *J* and in each mind the memory of six-years of ever increasing Nazi terror.

They all held official landing certificates signed by Colonel Manuel Benites, Cuba's director general of immigration.⁴⁴ For 734 of the refugees, Cuba would be but a temporary sanctuary, a way station on route to their future home- the United States. They have fulfilled U.S. immigration

requirements, completed the forms and held quota numbers which would permit them to enter the United States from three months to three years after their arrival in Cuba.⁴⁵

The refugees were unaware that President Frederico Laredo Bru of Cuba had signed a degree number 93 invalidating their landing certificates. Their landing certificates sold to them by the Hamburg-American line were worthless.

After reaching Havana, desperate negotiations started but without success. The Cubans demanded \$ 1,000.000. The negotiations continued but ship was ordered to leave the shores of Havana. The courageous German captain of the *St. Louis* moved the ship closer to Miami as he wanted to delay the return to Hamburg as long as possible. The 734 refugees with United States immigration papers had a glimpse of their future homeland. *The United States Coast Guard cutter 244* shadowed the *St. Louis*, with order to prevent any refugees from jumping overboard and swimming ashore.

Newspaper descriptions of the scene prompted Bishop James Cannon Jr., of Richmond, Virginia, to write a letter to the Richmond Time-Dispatch:

...the press reported that the ship came close enough to Miami for the refugees to see the lights of the city. The press also reported that the U.S. Coast Guard, under instruction from Washington, followed the ship...to prevent any people landing at our shores. And during the days when this horrible tragedy was being enacted right at our doors, our government in Washington made no effort to relieve the desperate situation of these people, but on the contrary gave orders that they be kept out of the country. Why did not the President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of Labor and other officials confer together to arrange for the landing of these refugees who had been caught in the maelstrom of distress and agony through no fault of their own?... The failure to take any steps whatever to assist these distressed, persecuted Jews in their hour of extremity was one of the most disgraceful things which

happened in American history and leaves a stain and brand of shame upon the record of our nation.⁴⁶

The *SS Louis* returned to Europe. In the final disposition, 214 went to Belgium, 287 to England, 181 to Holland and 224 to France.⁴⁷ Only those in England survived.

U.S. Hardens Refugee Policies

"Jewish Refugees Are
Subversive and Dangerous"

The United States' rejection of the *SS Louis* passengers was not lost on Hitler and his propagandists. It was only one of many indications that his treatment of the Jews would not expose him the wrath of the United States. The August 1939 issue of Der Weltkampf commented upon democratic pretense and reality :

" We are saying openly that we do not want the Jews while the democracies keep on claiming that they are willing to receive them- and then leave the guests out in the cold ! Aren't we savages better men after all ? " ⁴⁸

After the *SS Louis* the United States' policy regarding refugees hardened. Beckinridge Long in charge of immigration saw the refugees as subversion entering the land of liberty, cloaked in the shabby garment of a refugee.⁴⁹ In June 1941, new regulations were issued by the State Department making it virtually impossible for refugees with close relative in occupied Europe to enter the United States.

The ruling applied to prospective immigrants from Norway, Holland, Belgium, occupied France, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Balkans, as well as Germany and Austria.

Its cumbersome wording did not conceal its deadly meaning :

... the fact that a relative of the first degree on consanguinity (father, mother, sister, wife and children), with whom the applicant had maintained close family ties, remains abroad in any country or territory under the control of a country whose form of government is opposed to the form of government of the United States may be considered with other evidence that the ties between such relative and the applicant would make the entry of the applicant prejudicial to the public safety or inimical to the interests of the United States.⁵⁰

Thus Jewish refugees were in most of the cases classified as " enemy aliens. " ⁵¹

The Bermuda Conference Another Tragic Failure of Rescue

Early in 1943 after learning from various sources of the Nazis' design and implementation of the Final Solution, some determination to halt the Nazi massacre seemed to appear. Suggestions poured to Washington and London.

Some of the suggestions were:⁵²

1. A direct appeal to the Axis powers via neutrals for the release of the Jews, with an Allied guarantee to find them temporary havens until the end of the war.
2. The temporary suspension of American immigration quotas to expedite the flow of refugees.
3. Relaxation of the Anglo-American blockade to permit the shipment of foods, clothing, medical supplies and funds to Jews imprisoned in concentration camps.
4. Pressure of the International Red Cross to provide the same

safeguards for imprisoned Jews as prisoners of war or interned civilians. These had been denied because the Germans had declared the Jews to be "stateless", common criminals. The International Red Cross had in effect accepted these German designations. Its infrequent and generally informal efforts to assuage the misery the Jews in concentration camps were feeble and unconvincing.⁵³

5. Demands for the British to revoke their White Paper of 1939, which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to a total of seventy-five thousand within a five-year-period in March 1944. Palestine, the Jewish homeland pledged by Britain's Balfour Declaration of 1917, remained the one place in the world where Jewish escapees were welcome. Moreover, its Jewish residents wished to raise an army to fight side by side with Britain against the Nazis.

A conference in Bermuda to deal with these and other suggestions concerning refugees opened on April 19, 1943. The Conference ended in total failure.

Call of Desperation
from the Warsaw Ghetto
The Response:
Deafening Silence

On the same day that the conference opened, the Germans launched their final assault on the Warsaw ghetto. Reinforced troops and police moved against the sixty thousand Jews remaining of the original half million inhabitants (more than three hundred thousand had already been deported and tens of thousands had perished from typhus, starvation and murder in the street.) On the fifth day of the fighting the citizens of the embattled ghetto

addressed a desperate appeal to their Christian countrymen:

This is a fight for your freedom as well as ours. Poles, citizens, soldiers of freedom! Above the din of German cannon... machine guns... through the smoke of the burning ghetto.. we, the slaves of the ghetto, convey heartfelt greetings to you. We are aware that you have been witnessing our ordeal with horror and compassion.. Every doorstep in the ghetto.. shall remain a fortress until the end. All of us will perish in the fight but we will never surrender... This is a fight for your freedom as well as ours, for your dignity and honor as well as ours. We shall avenge Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, Majdanek !

Long live freedom !

Death to the hangmen and murderers !

Our struggle against the enemy must go until the end .⁵⁴

On the ninth day of the battle a message was sent from the ghetto fighters to their compatriots in London:

Only the power of the Allied nations can offer immediate and active help now . On behalf of the millions of Jews burned and murdered and buried alive, on behalf of those fighting back and all of us condemned to die we call the whole world... Our closest allies must at last understand the degree of responsibility which arises from such an apathy in face of an unparalleled crime committed by the Nazis against a whole nation, the tragic epilogue of which is now being enacted. The heroic rising, without precedent in history, of the doomed sons of the ghetto should at last awaken the world to deeds commensurate with the gravity of the hour .⁵⁵

On May 12, 1943 , thirteen days after the adjournment of the Bermuda Conference, Szymul Zygielbojm, aged forty-eight, a member of the Polish

National Council in London, who for weeks pleaded tirelessly with the Allied Governments to come to the rescue of the men and women in the Warsaw Ghetto and to force the Germans to realize that swift punishment awaited them for their barbarities; who sent cables to the heads of state (including President Roosevelt) and addressed public meetings, committed suicide in London. He left a farewell note addressed to the President and Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile:

I cannot be silent. I cannot live while the remnant of the Jewish population of Poland, of whom I am representative, are perishing. My friends in the Warsaw ghetto died with weapons in their hands in their last heroic battle. It was not my destiny to die together with them but I belong to them and in their mass graves.

By my death I wish to make my final protest against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people.

I know how little human life is worth today, but as I was unable to do anything during my life, perhaps by my death I shall contribute to breaking down the indifference of those who may now at the last moment rescue the few Polish Jews still alive... I bid farewell to everybody and to everything that was dear to me and that I have loved.⁵⁶

Antagonism in the World

Dictates Jewish Refugee

Policy and Rescue

Many important members of the U.S. State Department and the British Foreign office fought to keep Jewish immigrants out of the United States and the British Empire, notwithstanding the emergency of World War II and

the Holocaust. They appeared to be motivated not only by a legalistic approach to the issues, a general xenophobia, and opposition to humanitarian "distractions" from the war effort, but also antagonism to Jews in particular. As a result, these men deliberately withheld information about the Holocaust, sabotaged American rescue operations, and saw to it that American immigration quotas were not filled.⁵⁷

Assistant Secretary State Beckinridge Long's rigorous application of the quota system in keeping Jewish refugees out of the United States was inhuman. Between 1933 and 1940, the U.S. had admitted 127,000 refugees from Nazi Germany. But the number of refugees who stayed in the U.S. from the German quotas was only 51,960. Between Pearl Harbor and the end of the war, only 21,000 refugees were admitted to the U.S., most of them Jews. They comprised only 10 percent of the quota numbers available from Axis-controlled countries. The figures for all immigrants to the United States between 1939 and 1945 had been estimated at 15,000-30,000. Earl Harrison, Commissioner of Immigration, had stated that "not since 1862 have there been fewer aliens entering the country."⁵⁸

The Tragedy of the Jews of Hungary

The Allies' attitude also played a significant role in the tragedy of Hungarian Jewry. During the German occupation of Hungary on March 19, 1944 till the "liberation-occupation" of Hungary by the Soviet Union in the beginning of 1945 596,260 Hungarian Jews were deported. Of the total 116,500 lived to witness liberation by the Allied armies. The Hungarian Jewish community lost almost seventy percent of its members.⁵⁹ The

failure to check this systematic slaughter must heavily lay on the Allies too. All pleas to bomb Auschwitz and the railroads were ignored. The negotiations for the release of Hungarian Jews for ransom were voted down. On April 25, 1944 Eichmann offered the proposal "Blood for money, money for blood."⁶⁰ Eichmann suggested to the representatives of the Hungarian Jewish community to advise the Allies that 1,000,000 Jews will be freed for goods such as 10,000 trucks, 8,000 tons of coffee, two million bars of soap, and 200 tons of each, cocoa, sugar, and tea.⁶¹ The Allies' response was to arrest the messenger who brought the proposal to them. Numerous pleas were made to bomb the route to Auschwitz and Auschwitz itself. Churchill, Anthony Eden and President Roosevelt stated the Allies policy: "No negotiations direct or indirect" [for any other reason than unconditional surrender]" with the Hun."⁶²

The Refusal of the Allies to Bomb the Death Camps of Auschwitz- Birkenau and the Railways

The bombing issue most poignantly mirrors Allied callousness toward rescue during the Holocaust. Had the wish to destroy the gas chambers existed, the early data on file could have contributed decisively to their total demolition. Already on May 8, 1944, the commander of the Allied air forces in Italy indicated that the U.S. 15th Air force based on Foggia had the capacity to attack simultaneously the Blechhammer oil-refining complex 47 miles from Auschwitz and the industries at Auschwitz. The first mission on June 2 of "Operation Frantic", which allowed American bombers to extend their range by flying between Britain or Italy and Poland in the Soviet Union,

considerably impaired the Hungarian marshalling yards at Debrecen- on the deportation route to Auschwitz.⁶³ A second shuttle, flying back to Italy from Russia on June 26 to strike the synthetic oil plant at Drohobycz, crossed directly over one of the five deportation lines- and trains- to Auschwitz and came within 30 miles of two others. , The same day an American reconnaissance mission, seeking information on the I. G. Farben complex (Buna , or Auschwitz III), in Monowitz, flew over and by chance photographed Birkenau (Auschwitz II) nearby . These reports were received both by the British and Americans, yet London and Washington did not correlate the relevant information, even though both obtained a summary of a previous Auschwitz report, including an accurate diagram of the centers, during the first week of July.⁶⁴

Industrial plants near Auschwitz came under constant Allied air attacks between July and November, 1944.⁶⁵ On August 18, 1944, 127 *Flying Fortresses*, escorted by 100 *Mustang* fighters , dropped 1,336 500-pound high explosive bombs over I. G. Farben factories less than five miles east of the gas chamber . American bombers, again taking pictures of the Monowitz industrial area near Auschwitz on August 25, also photographed Birkenau.

The American view that a strike against Auschwitz- Birkenau would have necessitated the "diverting of airpower" from " decisive operation elsewhere" is refuted by these bombings.⁶⁶ The sad fact is that the Allies never wanted to bomb the facilities of Auschwitz or even designated them as targets. The four gassing crematoria, standing in two pairs and topped by four tall chimneys could have been easily pinpointed from the air , from the American aerial photographs, and maps on file with the Polish government-in-exile in London and other reports. 24,000 bodies burned in the crematoria of Auschwitz and in open pits nearby during one 24-hour period

in August. Heavy bombers flying at their normal attitude of 20,000- 26,000 feet could not have missed the pitch -black sickly smoke in the Polish air. And even if precise bombing had been tried and failed, one saturation bombing, as well as a few *Mitchell* bombers flying at lower heights or some *Lightning* dive-bombers refueling at the island of Vis, could have accomplished the destruction.⁶⁷

There is no consolation in fact either that the Soviet refused to consider the rescue of Jews at all.

The Immoral Silence of the Pope The Collaborations of Churches with the Nazis

The Churches, especially Pope Pius XII, were silent.

As the head of the Church speaking for the Church, Pope Pius XII, was reluctant to make any gesture to condemn the Nazis. On October 6, 1942, Harold Tittman, Assistant to the U.S. President's Personal Representative at the Vatican, speculated that the Pope's disinclination to issue a public statement about Nazi 'atrocities' in Poland was rooted in a fear that the German people would reproach him.⁶⁸ Moreover, Pope Pius had many years of "conditioning" in Germany when he represented the Vatican there. Tittmann nevertheless attempted to enlist the Papacy's support of an Allied Declaration dated December 17, 1942, "German Policy of Extermination of the Jewish Race."⁶⁹ Luigi Cardinal Maglione, the Vatican's Secretary of State, declared that the Pope could not publicly denounce particular atrocities.⁷⁰ Pius XII thereupon delivered a Christmas message with only veiled reference to hundreds of thousands killed or dying only because of

their race. When Tittmann expressed his disappointment, the Pope stated plainly that he could not name the Nazis without including the Communists.⁷¹

In the multitude of documents published by the Vatican about the diplomatic activity of the Pope and his envoys, the nuncios, there are very few instructions to raise the subject of the Jews. When the nuncios spoke, they seem to have followed their own dictates. Monsignor Cesare Orsenigo in Berlin was especially feeble in this attempt. Addressing Staatssekretar Ernst von Weizacker in the German Foreign Office about the so called hostage shootings in Serbia- mass killings that at the same time aimed at Jews and Gypsies -he first asked whether the German official was amenable to such a discussion and, when given a negative reply, promptly withdrew his request.⁷²

The officials of the Vatican Department of State, like those in Washington, did not put their pieces of information together. When Myron Taylor, the American President's Representative at the Vatican, asked on September 26, 1942, whether the Vatican could confirm reports of mass killings, Cardinal Maglione noted in his file that he had no confirmation of such grave news.⁷³ Much later, in May 1943, an unsigned memorandum for the record in the office of the Vatican Secretary of State hinted at discovery and dismay. "Jews, horrendous situation," the writer began and went on to describe the disappearance of Polish Jewry, special camps for death, including Treblinka, and gas.⁷⁴ In September 1942, the German army occupied Rome and during the following month, Jews were seized in the Italian capital, the city where the Pope himself was the bishop.

After the first transport had left Rome with just over a thousand Jews, Weizacker, now the German envoy at the Vatican, noted the remarkable failure of the Pope to say something. There was only an indistinct report in the Vatican newspaper, Osservatore Romano, this after a deportation that

had taken place "under the windows of the Pope."⁷⁵ Weiszacker language was not mere a figure of speech. Many Jewish victims had been captured in a poor quarter of the city, *Trastevere*, on the same side of the Tiber River as the Vatican, within a few minutes' walking distance from it.⁷⁶

Auxiliary Bishop Vincentas Brizgys in Lithuania welcomed the Germans. In the small area of Lithuania Brizgys could not remain unaware of the massive participation of Lithuanians in the shootings of Jews. It is at height of these massacres that he forbade the Lithuanian clergy to assist the Jews in any way.⁷⁷

In Lvov, the Ukrainian Metropolitan Andrej Septyckyj, whose domain was the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite in the region, also welcomed the Germans. But later on, realizing the German occupants as regime of terror and corruption, more diabolical than that of the Bolsheviks, he wrote on August 29-31, 1942, a lengthy letter to the Pope about the atrocities in his region. The number of Jews killed had passed two hundred thousands. There had been massacres in Kiev and Ukrainian villages of men, women, and children. He had protested against this homicide in pastoral letters.⁷⁸

The Pope did not have to compose a reply. He had already done so on August 26, as if anticipating Septyckyj's consternation. In the Papal letter, which arrived in Lvov after several weeks, Pius XII quoted Psalm 27: "Dominus illuminatio mea, et salus mea, quem timebo? Dominus protector vitae meae, a quo trepidabo?" (The Lord is my light and my savior; whom should I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life; whom shall I dread?) The Pope counseled Steptyckyj to bear adversity with serene patience.⁷⁹

Monsignor Alois C. Hudal was the titular bishop of the German community in Rome. During the War he never ceased to pray for Germany's victory, and when Italy surrendered to the Allies, he considered the armistice treason. After Germany itself was defeated, he helped fleeing

Nazis with false papers.⁸⁰

The Churches' attitude toward the Holocaust was not born in vacuum. "Adolf Hitler, the Third Reich, the Aryan paragraphs, and the Death Camps- these were not accidental appearances in the heart of Christendom. They were not strange and inexplicable manifestations of some sudden revolt of the demonism, irruptions out of the abyss which defy intelligent appraisal"-

according to Franklin H. Littell in his book , The Crucifixion of the Jew s.⁸¹

"Neither were they uniquely German and Teutonic, as though some racial explanation might serve to take the curse from the rest of us. They were legitimate offspring of a "Christian civilization", which underneath the cosmetics of official creeds and public display of piety, was formless and heathen at heart."⁸²

"The mass murder of Jews by Christians took place in the heart of Christendom. " ⁸³

"Had the Jew Jesus of Nazareth lived in the " right" time and right " place", he would have been dispatched to a gas chamber. Many of the Nazi executions of Jews were carried out by believing Christians-lament Alice L Eckardt and A. Roy Eckardt.⁸⁴

No event has made more clear the consequences of ideas than the German Nazi "Final Solution to the Jewish Problem." There could have been no " Jewish problem" to resolve had not almost two millenia of Christian teaching and preaching create it. There could have been no bureaucracy of highly trained civil servants and professionals willing to initiate and carry out mechanized and systematic mass murder without the development over several centuries of a technological and scientific mindset that saw nothing wrong in using ruthless social engineering to crate a national society from which all human' problems " must be eliminated."⁸⁵

The Shocking American Attitudes Toward the Holocaust

What was the attitude of the American people to the Holocaust? What was the attitude of the press?

Despite astonishing amount of information about the Nazi atrocities available long before concentration camps were opened, polls showed that, even as late as 1945, most Americans still refused to believe the tragic reality of the Holocaust and labeled it as propaganda. From 1933 to 1945 most of the American newspapers did not report the full horror of the Third Reich.

Since the onset of the Nazi rule American had greeted almost all the news of Nazi German's persecution of the Jews skeptically. Inevitably, their first reaction was to question whether it was true. Before, during and even after the war many Americans, including those associated with the press, refused to believe the news they heard. In a January, 1943 Gallup Poll nearly 30 percent of those asked dismissed the news that 2 million Jews had been killed in Europe as just rumors.⁸⁶ Another 24 percent had no opinion at all on the question. Informal tolls taken by the Detroit Free Press and the New York Post in 1943 found that broad range of Americans did not believe the atrocity reports.⁸⁷

The Christian Century editorial pages advocated in 1944 that there was no point in "screaming" about the atrocities against the Jews because this would only "emotionally exhaust" those who wanted "after" the war to use their energies to "building peace."⁸⁸

Doubts still existed even at the very end of the war after American soldiers, reporters, editors, publicists and members of Congress had seen the death camps and after the Army Signal Corp screened a movie on the atrocities in American theaters.⁸⁹

There were critics who argued that the reports, photographs and films detailing what had been found in the death camps were being released to implant in the American public a feeling of vengeance. The Nation in May, 1945,⁹⁰ published an article, in which the author attacked the films even though he had not seen them. The author did not believe "it necessary to do so." Such propaganda - even if true - was designed to make Americans equate all Germans with the few who perpetrated these crimes. An article in the Progressive went even a step further.⁹¹ The author argued not only against vengeance but questioned whether the films and reports could really be true. "There are to be sure fantastic discrepancies in the reports."

The American press has to bear a great measure of responsibility for the public's skepticism and ignorance of the scope of the Holocaust. The public's doubts were strengthened and possibly even created the manner in which the media told the story of the Holocaust.

During the years of the Nazi persecution and "The Final Solution" journalists frequently said that the news of persecutions, deportations, executions and mass murders did not come from eyewitnesses who could personally confirm what had happened and, therefore, as journalists, they were obliged to treat them skeptically. This explanation is faulty because much of the information came from German sources, statements and broadcasts and newspapers too. If anything, these German sources would have been inclined to deny, not to verify the news. Neutral sources also affirmed the reliability of the reports. Moreover, even when the press did encounter witnesses, it often dismissed what they had to say because they were not considered "reliable" or "impartial."⁹² Given these prejudicial feelings about witnesses, one would have thought that visits, by journalists themselves to the massacre sites would have dissipated the doubts.

But this was not the case. In October, 1943, Soviet officials brought a group of foreign reporters to Babi Yar, the site of horrible massacre near Kiev. The Russians told the reporters that the German had massacred between 50,000 and 80,000 Jews in September 1941 and the total number of the Jews of Kiev who had been killed might climb to over 100,000.⁹³

By this point the Nazi threat to "exterminate" the Jews should have been understood as a literary one. There was little reason, in the light of the abundance of evidence, to deny that multitudes were being murdered as planned of a planned program of annihilation. But despite all the details there was a feeling among some correspondents, the prominent New York Times reporter Bill Lawrence among them, that the reports that Hitler and his followers had conducted a systematic extermination campaign was untrue. Lawrence did not doubt that Hitler had "treated the Jews badly, forcing many of them to flee to the sanctuaries of the West."⁹⁴ His skepticism permeated his story on Babi Yar. Though he acknowledged that there were no more Jews in Kiev, their whereabouts he simply dismissed as a "mystery."⁹⁵

Part of the responsibility for both American skepticism and the press's ambiguous treatment of the news can be traced directly to Allied opposition to publicizing reports of atrocities against Jewish victims. The identity of the victims was universalized. The Allies argued that if they treated Jews as a separate entity, it would validate Nazi ideology. A truer explanation for this behavior was American and British fear that singling out the unique tragic fate of the Jews would strengthen the demands of those who wanted the Allies to undertake specific rescue actions on their behalf. The Americans worried that they might be asked to admit more Jewish refugees and the British were concerned that pressure would be put upon them to open Palestine to Jews.

Many government officials, members of the press, and leaders of

various fanatical organizations considered Jewish life a cheap commodity. Even when Jewish fighters in Warsaw managed to hold the Germans at bay, most of the press simply ignored the fact.

A real antipathy towards Jews certainly affected the Allied response. Virtually no one was willing to advocate that to be taken to stop the carnage. In 1944 State Department officials warned Secretary of State Cordell Hull that the War Refugee Board should be restrained in its rescue efforts lest "Hitler takes advantage of the offer to embarrass the United States."⁹⁶ The most efficacious thing for the Allies was to try to ignore the Holocaust and make sure that those whose responsibility it was to disseminate information did the same. And the press, having convinced itself that there was nothing that could be done and having inured itself to the moral consideration of what was happening, followed suit. It was a cumulative and collective failure. The press was ultimately as culpable as the government.

The Jews of Europe were expendable, were abandoned, and were finally massacred.

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CHAPTER 10

From Holocaust to Redemption - Bearing Witness

Liberators

On April 10, 1945, Adolf Eichmann, made his last visit to Theresienstadt. There he was heard to say that " I shall gladly jump into the pit, knowing that in the same pit there are five million enemies of the state."¹

On April 13, the Red Army entered Vienna. One of the last trains to leave the city before the arrival of the Red Army reached Theresienstadt on April 15 with 109 Jews. This was the last deportation of the war organized by Eichmann's department.²

On April 14, United States troops reached Gardenlagen in Germany. There, in yet another camp established for death marchers, they found, in a huge open pit, the still burning logs on which the bodies of the dead had been cremated.³

The Liberation of Bergen-Belsen

On April 15, the first British tanks entered Bergen-Belsen. By chance, three of the British soldiers in the tanks were Jews. But the survivors did not realize what had happened : " We, the cowed and emaciated inmates of the camp, did not believe we were free...It seemed to us a dream which would soon turn into cruel reality. "⁴

At Bergen-Belsen, the ' cruel reality' came swiftly, as those first British tanks moved on, in pursuit of the German forces. For the next forty-

eight hours the camp remained only nominally under British control, with Hungarian SS guards in partial command. During that brief interval, seventy two Jews and eleven non-Jews were shot by the Hungarians for such offenses as taking potato peel from the kitchen.⁵

When, finally, British troops did enter Bergen-Belsen in force, the evidence of mass murder on a vast scale became immediately apparent to them. Of ten thousand unburied bodies, most were victims of starvation. Even after the liberation three hundred inmates died each day during the ensuing week from typhus and starvation. Even after the arrival of massive British medical aid, personnel, and food, the death rate was still, sixty a day after two weeks and more.⁶

"Men and women, clad in rags and barely able to move from starvation and typhus, lay in their straw bunks in every state of filth and degradation... The dead and dying could not be distinguished. Man and women collapsed as they walked and fell dead."⁷ "In order to cope with what they found in "verminous and stinking barracks", the British army doctors "marked a red cross on the foreheads of those they thought had a chance of surviving."⁸

The first day liberation was described by an inmate in Bergen-Belsen the following way:

A new life breathed in the camp. Jeeps, command cars, and half tracks drove around the barracks. Khaki uniforms abounded, the marvelously substantial material of their battle dress mingling with the rags of the deportees. Our liberators were well fed and bursting with health, and they moved among our skeletal, tenuous silhouettes like a surge of life. We felt an absurd desire to finger them, to let our hands trail in their eddies as in the Fountain of Youth.⁹

Photographs , films and articles about Bergen-Belsen circulated widely in Britain by the end of April, making so great an impact that the word " Belsen" was become synonymous with " inhumanity." ¹⁰ The British were shocked as they never thought they could be by the sights that confronted them. " There had been no food for five days preceding the British entry". A British army review reported. " Evidence of cannibalism was found. The inmates had lost all self-respect, were degraded morally to the level of beasts. Their clothes were in rags, teeming with lice, and both inside and outside the huts there was an almost continuous carpet of dead bodies, human excreta, rags and filth.." ¹¹

One British soldier described the conditions of the survivors in Bergen Belsen in a letter to his wife :

The sight of these affects one profoundly, for while there is still life and movement, we are interested in their salvation mentally and physically. The conditions in which these people live are appalling. One has to take a tour round and see their faces, their slow staggering and feeble movements. The state of their minds is plainly written on their faces, as starvation has reduced their bodies to skeletons. The fact is that all these were once clean-living and sane and certainly not the type to do harm to the Nazis. They are Jews and are dying now at the rate of three hundred a day. They must die and nothing can save them- their end inescapable, they are too far gone now to be brought back to life.

I saw their corpses lying near their hovels, for they crawl or totter into the sunlight to die. I watched them to make their last feeble journeys, and even as I watched they died. ¹²

The British soldier added:

I never have seen people looking so ill, so wretched , so near to death. Bergen -Belsen is a living death, an example of Nazi methods, the best indictment of their government one could ever find, and if it is ever necessary, an undoubted answer to those

who want to know what we have been fighting for. One feeble movement of the hand in salutation to us from these people is also an answer, for our coming has saved thousands in this camp alone, but for many it is too late.¹³

On the same day that the British troops entered Belsen, American troops entered yet another camp at Nordhausen in Germany, where hundreds of slave laborers were found, "in conditions", as the United States Signal Corp recorded, "almost unrecognizable as humans. All were a little more than skeletons; the dead lay beside the sick and dying in the same bed; filth and human excrement covered the floors. No attempt had been made to alleviate the disease and gangrene that had spread unchecked among the prisoners."¹⁴

The Americans listened in Belsen in horror, as did the British, to the stories of the past atrocities that every liberated prisoner could recount. "I mention an example of greatest bestiality," a United States investigator recorded. "A woman in the last stages of pregnancy was thrown down by an SSman who then stepped on her with his boots until, birth was forced. In blood and pain the women died wretchedly."¹⁵

The Liberation of Dachau

On April 29, American troops entered Dachau. On May 1, 1945, the following article by Tec. James W. Creasman, an American soldier, appeared in his "42nd Rainbow Infantry Division Bulletin":

Dachau is no longer the name of terror for hunted men; 32,000 of them have been freed by the 42nd Rainbow Division. The crimes done behind the walls of this worst of concentration camps now live to haunt the memories of the Rainbowmen who tore open its gates and first saw its misery, and to accuse its SS keepers of one of the worst crimes in history.

When infantrymen of the 42nd Division fought their way in to Dachau against fanatical SS troops who met deserved deaths, among the moats, behind the high fences and in the railways littered with the bodies of 50 carloads of starved victims, these hardened soldiers expected to see horrible sights.

But no human imagination, fed with the most fantastic of tales that have leaked out from the earliest and most notorious camps, could have prepared them for what they saw there.

The keen descriptive powers of a score of ace correspondents who entered the camp while the battle of liberation was still in progress- and through whose eyes the whole world looked upon that scene- could not do justice to this story. Seasoned as they were by long acquaintanceship with stark reality, those trained observers gazed at the freight cars full of piled cadavers- no more than bones covered with skin- and they could not believe what they saw with their eyes.

Riflemen accustomed witnessing death had no stomach for rooms stacked almost ceiling- high with tangled human bodies adjoining the cremation furnaces, looking like maniac's woodpile.

And when an officer pressed through the mobs of the forgotten men of all nation's inside the electric barbed wire enclosure and entered a room where lay the dying survivors of the horror train, he wept unashamedly. Limp ghost under filthy blankets tried to salute him with broomstick arms, back in deathly stupor from which most would never rose.

Ten days before the arrival of the Rainbow Division, fifty carloads of prisoners arrived at Dachau from Buchenwald concentration camp in a starving condition after days without food. When Buchenwald was threatened by advancing American troops, the Nazis hurriedly crowded some 4,000 of their prisoners into open flatcars, unfit even for cattle. Twenty-seven days later- and days of exposure to freezing weather without anything to eat- a trainload of human suffering arrived at Dachau only to be left to die in the railyard leading into this extermination camp.

So in these stinking cars were the bodies of those prisoners too weak even to get out. A few tried, and they made a bloody heap in the door of one of the cars. They had been machine-gunned by the SS. A little girl was in that car. In another car, sitting on the bodies of his comrades, his face contorted with pain, was the body of one who had completed the amputation of his gangrenous leg with his own hands and covered the stump with paper. Underneath was one with a crushed skull. "He's better off now" was the comment of one newsman. Close by was one who had been beaten until his entrails protruded from his back.

But most of them had simply died in the attitudes of absolute exhaustion that only starving can assure. Curled up with their faces resting in fingers tipped with blue nails, with naked buttocks angling up to pivot on skeletal points. Or twisted over to show an abdomen stretched drum tight against the spine, the ribs protruding.

Visible proof of atrocities.

Some of the cars had been emptied and the bodies carted to the crematorium, In one end room adjoining the furnace room on the left they were neatly stacked. The stripped corpses were very straight. But in the room on the right they were piled in complete disorder, still clothed.

With the help of a Yugoslav inmate who worked at the furnaces and who said that all four of them had been going "*Tag und Nacht*" (day and night) with a capacity of seven bodies each- the explanation was partially unfolded. The straight, neat ones had probably been brought in alive, showered in the shower-room, then gassed or hanged from hooks on the rafters in front of the furnaces. Those on the right were just as they were- dumped out of the freight cars where they had died of starvation.

It was incredible that such things could happen today, but there was the visible proof.

At least, 5, perhaps 50, were beaten to death by inmates who struck with all the fury of men who suddenly released years of pent-up hate. One was lying beside his own bloody artificial

limb with which his brains had been exposed. Someone said that there were 14 in the canal.

These once swaggering Hitler worshippers would pocket no more of the profits from the hair-oil, shoe-polish, thermos bottles, porcelain works of art, and cigarette paper manufactured there by men and women from all over Europe who slaved until starvation and disease made them worthless to their masters, who then burned them.

Now the SS guards were dead. But their deaths could not avenge the thousands deads and dying in Dachau.

These tortured dead can only be avenged when our world is aroused so much by what the 42nd uncovered at Dachau and by what others have found at all the other Dachaus scattered throughout the Germany, that *never again* will any party, any government, any people be allowed to mar the face of the earth with such inhumanity.¹⁶

Among the liberators of Dachau on April 29, 1945 was Major General William Levine. Levine was an intelligence officer with the 7th Army in Europe, when his unit began moving east through Germany, along the Danube, in the early months of 1945.

Here are some of the recollections of Major General Levine:

... We had heard of the conditions in the various camps. Yet there was no way of preparing us for what we were to see. The enormity and the horror could not be put into words. Before I went into Dachau, it was impossible for me to imagine that humans could do this to one another... I remember crying seeing the inmates... Just before we entered the facility, we went through the town of Dachau. There we saw a railroad track that ran in the middle of the camp. In the boxcars of the train were dead inmates of other camps who had been evacuated to Dachau right before their camps were overrun. There were bodies all along the track. They had dropped out of the cars because the people running the train and administrators of the camps had fled.

The condition in the camp, when we arrived, were absolutely deplorable. Typhus had spread through the whole camp, and most of the inmates were extremely sick. The dead and the living were everywhere... When I saw gas chambers and crematoriums, I could not believe it. I just could not comprehend it...

Before we arrived, rumors had infiltrated the camp that American forces were approaching. When we arrived, a great feeling of happiness seemed to pervade the camp. The survivors came up to us and hugged us. As soon as we got over the initial shock, we moved in and began to give assistance.

We cleaned the place up, restored the camp to make more inhabitable, saw that the inmates get enough food and clothing, helped them to get healthy and worked on repatriating them to their homes as quickly as possible.

What struck me most about the survivors was their will to survive. This will was so strong and so overpowering that it caused people to do things that they never would have been able to do under normal circumstances. Each day was worse than the one before it, but they survived...¹⁷

Before he left, Major General Levine also debriefed the inhabitants of the town of Dachau and the nearby area :

They all said that they did not know what was going on at the camp, but I learned in my debriefings that there is no way they could not have known. The Nazis used the inmates of the camp as slave labor in the surrounding area, and the route these prisoners took to work went right through the town. In some cases, the prisoners were taken to the woods at night, stripped of all their clothing, hosed down with water and left to freeze. The townspeople had to know about this. For some of them their economic livelihood was involved. Most of them were willing collaborators, some of them did not have courage to help...¹⁸

Major General Levine, after his retirement from the Army, dedicated his life to educate the future generations about the Holocaust and its lessons.

Among the liberators of Dachau the U.S. Army's 522nd Field Army Battalion of Japanese Americans who were recruited from *Nisei*- Americans of Japanese descent- who were incarcerated after the attack on Pearl Harbor. They were among the first to liberate Dachau and its subcamps.¹⁹ Some 50 Japanese-American Veterans met some of Dachau inmates they liberated in Jerusalem and exhibit at Yad Vashem was dedicated to them titled "Unlikely Liberators" in 1992.²⁰

The Liberation of Buchenwald

Two weeks before the liberation of Dachau, American platoons liberated Buchenwald, near Weimar and near the "Goethe Oak", a noble tree associated with the eighteenth century giant of literature and German letters. Approximately 238,000 prisoners, many of them Jews, but also non-Jewish Poles, Russians and dissident Germans, had been incarcerated in Buchenwald since its inception.²¹ Throughout the war the deportation trains and convoys moved in meticulously maintained schedules out of Buchenwald to the death camps farther east. But even in this temporary detention camp, some 56,000 had died or been murdered.²²

When the forward platoons of Americans arrived on the morning of April 11, 1945, only about 20,000 prisoners remained.²³ Some of the first Americans to enter the camp vomited as their eyes beheld what their minds could not absorb- bodies stacked in obscene anonymity, the barely living whimpering among the corpses, bunks full of shaven-headed, emaciated creatures who had wizened into skeletal apparitions. American soldiers put on film the scenes in room full of naked, unburied corpses, piled ten feet

high .24

General Eisenhower's Comments on Nazi Brutality Discovered At the Camps

Soon after the takeover, General Dwight Eisenhower, commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, arrived. "I never felt able to describe my emotional reaction when I came face to face with the indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of human decency", he wrote. "Up to that moment I had only known about it generally, or through secondary sources. I am certain, however, that I have never at any time experienced an equal sense of shock."25

The Liberation of Mauthausen

On May 3, 1945 American forces entered and liberated Mauthausen. Situated about fourteen miles southeast of Linz, in Austria, not far from the Danube, Mauthausen was chosen by Himmler in 1938 primarily for a chain of more than fifty slave labor camps.26

Mauthausen contained stone and granite quarries, called *Weinergärten*, belonging to the municipality of Vienna, and useful for paving its streets. The prisoners, weakened by dysentery, their food described as "powdered manure", were whipped up 148 steps of the quarry in freezing weather, bearing heavy slabs of granite. Three weeks was the normal span of survival. Many of the victims, driven to desperation by their hopeless ordeal, ended their agony by jumping to their deaths from the top of the quarry. The

guards referred to these as " the parachutists and were vexed by their action since the spattered flesh and blood spoiled the neatness of the steps.²⁷ In the last months of the war forty-seven downed American pilots had been imprisoned in Mauthausen. They were among those who were compelled, barefooted, to make the climb. Men who reached the top were marched back and given heavier loads. By morning all were dead.²⁸

Lieutenant Colonel George Dyer, the senior historian of Patton's army, could barely find words to describe the conditions of the scarcely living relics. In his later official history he quoted one of his officers : " Ye, it is the smell, the odor of the death camp, that makes it burn the nostrils and memory. I will always smell Mauthausen."²⁹

In Mauthausen , in the middle of Austrian *Gemutlichkeit*, children taunted the new arrivals by throwing stones and chanting " You will soon be up the chimney of *Todesberg* (Death Hill)" ³⁰ and the phone of the camp was listed in the general directory.

Survivors

Displaced Persons

Sheerith Hapletah(Surviving remnants)

At the end of World War II, the Allied powers found approximately 7 million to 9 million people in Europe who had been uprooted by the war. By the end of 1945, more than 6 million had been repatriated, leaving 1.5 million to 2 million displaced persons (DPs), who refused to return to their prewar homes, either out of their free choice or because they feared retribution, economic deprivation, or annihilation.

On VE Day, May 8, 1945, the DPs included 200,000 Jews - survivors of forced labor camps, concentration camps, extermination camps, and death

marches. Most of these survivors gathered in displaced persons' (DP) camps and organized as a group with its own national consciousness and political objective - to be enabled to emigrate from Europe, primarily to settle in Palestine. The Jews organized under the Hebrew name *Sheerith Hapletah* ("surviving remnant; 1 Cr., 4:43), which existed as such from the end of the war in Europe in 1945 until December 1950.³¹

Sheerith Hapletah consisted of those Jews who, at the end of the war, refused to resume their lives in European countries and demanded categorically to be allowed to settle in other countries, and foremost, in Palestine.³²

Sheerith Hapletah initially consisted of some 50,000 Jews who had been inmates in concentration camps in Germany and in the Mauthausen camp in Austria. They were liberated by the Allies in April-May 1945.³³ The great majority had been taken to Germany and Austria in the final months of the war, in the evacuation stage of Auschwitz and other camps in the East. During this period they were subjected to "death marches" over a period of weeks and months, from one camp to another; endless human processions in subzero temperatures, lashed by torture and starvation, with the slightest falter resulting in death.³⁴ These survivors largely comprised the remaining Jews of Poland and Lithuania, who had been shut up for years in ghettos and concentration camps, large numbers of Hungarian Jews, who had been seized and transported to Auschwitz and to camps in the area of Vienna following the occupation of Hungary in March 1944, and a scattering of Jews from Nazi-occupied countries in Western Europe.

These Jews, particularly those who had been incarcerated in ghettos in Eastern Europe and in concentration camps, had, until the last day in captivity, not believed that they would escape the Nazis' clutches alive; or as, in Primo Levi's words, on the very eve of the liberation "not a single Jew

seriously believed that he would still be alive the next day."³⁵

When the moment of liberation finally did arrive, they were all totally exhausted in body, feeling alone and lost in a situation that compelled them to make decisions about their future course and fate after years of limiting their actions to mechanical responses to commands, orders, and punishments. The Jew of the free world seemed distant and foreign. "Real" Jews were only those who had experienced the horror and destruction. A most crucial question that every survivor had to consider was whether he should return to the land of his birth, his family's home for generations, now with no living vestige of Jewish existence or whether he should sever himself forever from his old home and build a new life in a new land? And, finally, after the crushing experience, were they able to start a new life and function in the framework of human society?³⁶

Jewish Survivors Are a Nuisance for the Allies

The hope that the survivors would receive special treatment because they had suffered more than the others and had been the prime target of Nazism was soon dashed. It became apparent, that in the eyes of the Allied military authorities in occupied Germany and Austria, the Jewish refugees, like millions of prisoners and forced-laborers, were an nuisance that had to be disposed of with all due speed. Thus already in 1943, the Allies, led by the United States, had created the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), principally in order to return displaced persons to their home.³⁷

After the liberation the American and British forces were confronted with a serious dilemma of huge dimensions ; what to do with the inmates of various camps and prisoners of war who refused to be evacuated to their former homeland? It is estimated that between seven and nine millions foreign nationals were in Germany against their will. It was only natural that the military wished to be rid of this human mass that demanded nourishment, care and security supervision, and tried to repatriate them as rapidly as possible. By the end of 1945, about six million people have been repatriated via various means of transportation. However, according to General Lucius Clay, who headed the Allied forces' civil administration, some 500,000 displaced persons still remained at the time in the American Zone in Germany.³⁸ The majority were Baltic nationals, Ukrainians and East Europeans ; some were collaborators who feared they would face trial in their former countries ; others were determined not to return to countries where Soviet -style regimes had been installed. Actually, the minority of DP were Jews.

The Jewish survivors, too, were a heterogeneous group. Western Europeans and Hungarians for the most part returned home. Those from Eastern Europe- Poland and the Baltic countries -knew full well that they had no one and no reason to go back ; their old homes had been destroyed, and between them and the local inhabitants there was only estrangement and sometimes even bitter reckoning. The majority of the survivors, therefore, decided not to be evacuated. Some only wished to return in the hope of finding loved ones or to salvage what remained of their belongings, but even these regarded the trip as no more than temporary. Only a small minority from Eastern Europe decided voluntarily to return on a permanent basis.³⁹

Jewish Survivors Are Housed in Former Concentration Camps

The Jewish DP's soon faced a formidable problem. They had chosen to stay in Germany and Austria, among the very engineers of the catastrophe. They were compelled to reside in the vicinity of the camps, in some cases actually within former concentration and labor camps. Ironically, Jewish DP's often lived in camps with former fascists and collaborators. Moreover, they had no recognized Jewish national or ethnic identity, but were considered nationals of their former country of residence. The military and administrative authorities in occupied Germany and Austria felt that to classify them as Jews- that is according to religion rather than by citizenship- would merely perpetuate their annulment of their legitimate civil rights and would be tantamount to adopting the Nazis racist criterion.⁴⁰ The survivors therefore launched a two-pronged struggle; to release themselves from German dependence while on German soil ; and to obtain permission to establish separate Jewish DP camps.

In April 1947, there were approximately 150,000 Jews in Displaced Persons' Camps in the American Zone in Germany and another 27,000 in Austria. In addition there were about 15,000 in the British Zone, a few thousand more in the French Zone, and the rest scattered in Southern Europe. The Jews, two years after the war ended, comprised about one-fourth of the population of the camps.⁴¹

The Suffering of
the Survivors
at the Refugee Camps

The living conditions in the camps were oppressive. The refugees were assigned primarily to makeshift quarters, abandoned German and Austrian military barracks, airplane hangars, garages, all overcrowded and short of toilets and washing facilities. The monotonous rations of black bread, cheese, and soup were served cafeteria-style to men and women, regarded as mendicants, waiting sullenly in long queues.⁴²

In the first months of the Displaced Persons' Camps most of the inmates were too ill or exhausted to challenge the authorities. Gradually, however, a less compliant leadership began to emerge and protests mounted against the slow pace of military bureaucracy. Reports on the camps reached the White House and impelled Truman, within a few weeks of his swearing in as President, to move with dispatch for remedial action. He commissioned a special representative, Earl Harrison, dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School and a member of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, to conduct an on-the-spot investigation of the camps.⁴³

The Harrison Report to President Truman

Harrison far from finding that published accounts had exaggerated the plight of the uprooted, concluded that their living conditions had been understated. "Beyond knowing that they are no longer in danger of gas chambers, torture and other forms of violent death", he wrote, "they see- and there is- little change... As matters now stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except we do not exterminate them. They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guards instead of the SS troops. One is led to wonder whether the German people,

seeing this, are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy."⁴⁴

Harrison urged that separate Jewish refugee camps should be set at once. He also called for an appeal to the British government to release 100,000 certificates for those who were eager to emigrate to Palestine. Harrison also strongly recommended legislation to modify American immigration laws so that the survivors who had relatives in the United States could be reunited with them.

Responding promptly, President Truman was sharp in his message to General Eisenhower. He directed him to give priority to those who had suffered most. "We must make clear to the German people," Truman cabled, "that we thoroughly abhor the Nazi policies of hatred and persecution. We have no better opportunity to demonstrate this than by the manner in which we ourselves actually treat the survivors remaining in Germany."⁴⁵

Eisenhower, in his official reply, noted that the problems of a prostrate Germany were overwhelming but reforms were already under way even as Harrison had been drafting his report. Eisenhower promised that other reforms will follow.⁴⁶

On September 17, on the High Holy Day of the Day Atonement, General Eisenhower visited one of the German camps at Feldafing, briefly attending services. He then inspected the camps and was visibly appalled by its squalor and degradation. On his way back to headquarters, he stopped in Stuttgart, and was again upset by the contrast between the facilities assigned to the Jews and the homes in which the civilian Germans lived. Eisenhower's shocked reaction received worldwide coverage.⁴⁷

General Patton's

Anti-Semitic Comments

on Survivors and DP Camps

General Eisenhower was not being well served by many members of his top staff. The case of General George Patton, while extreme, was not entirely unique. Patton carried deep prejudices. Commanding the Third Army in Europe, he caused embarrassment when he publicly questioned the military usefulness of black soldiers.⁴⁸ He never disguised the anti-Semitism he had imbedded in his childhood. Patton reluctantly accompanied Eisenhower on the Day Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) visit to Feldafing, and reacted violently. In his diary there was a stinging reference to the Harrison report:

One of the chief complaints of [Earl Harrison] is that the DPs are kept in camps under guard. Of course, Harrison is ignorant of the fact that if they were not kept under guard they would not stay in the camps, would spread all over the country like locusts, and would eventually have to be rounded up after quite a few of them had been shot and quite a few Germans murdered and pillaged. Harrison and his ilk believe that the DP is a human being, which he is not, and this applies particularly to the Jews who are lower than animals.⁴⁹

General Eisenhower
Orders Improvements
in the DP Camps

After General Eisenhower returned from his inspection tour, he organized drastic reforms in the operation of the camps. The barbed wire was removed and the guards were supplanted by unarmed Jews who did not interfere with the mobility of the camp inmates. Daily rations were increased and more varied food was made available. Overcrowding was ameliorated by measures that included the requisiting of some German homes.⁵⁰ But reforms came more slowly at lower levels, despite explicit directives from

General Eisenhower's headquarters.

By the end of 1945, even the most uncooperative officials realized that General Eisenhower and his commanding generals were in earnest about sympathetic treatment of the Jews. Before returning to Washington for new assignments, General Eisenhower had written:

My recent visit in several Jewish centers made a poignant impression. I saw thousand of men and women who had suffered in the German concentration camps and had looked so hopeless on their liberation. But now, many of them have improved in health and are imbued with new faith. I do not know when the stateless Jews will be given a permanent home. It is my aim, until that time, to make possible for them to lead a normal and useful life.⁵¹

The Search of Survivors for New Home

A good proportion of the DPs had dreamed of ultimate settlement in the United States. In Earl Harrison's report of 1945 he had strongly recommended that the United States share some responsibility for easing the plight of Jewish survivors by modifying its restrictive immigration laws. These had been enacted since 1924, and they established a quota of 2 percent of each nationality resident in the United States in 1890, before the immigration tides from eastern and southern Europe had become a significant social force. There was little likelihood that the restrictive quotas would be lifted after World War II. Jewish officials examined every possibility for other immigration outlets. There were extensive placement missions and interviews with many heads of states, including the Pope. A report on May, 1947 was utterly disheartening.⁵² Countries willing to accept very small numbers sought skills in mining, forestry, farming, and

shipping, useful for their own economies; but few among the Jewish Displaced Persons could qualify by experience.

It took many more years till the survivors found a new home, most of them in the State of Israel, a much smaller number in the United States and other countries. Through the non-denominational Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons American Immigration Laws were liberalized and some 400,000 DP's entered United States between 1945 and 1952, of whom only 137,450 were Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. " Although in the long run the DP acts of 1949 and 1950 established fine precedents, and in the long run benefitted refugees the world over, they failed to meet the needs of the majority of the Jewish DP's in Europe."⁵³ The America which had turned its back on Jews in the thirties did so after the war as well, again mocking the noble words of Emma Lazarus inscribed on the Statute of Liberty.

The Number of Survivors

What was the number of the survivors of concentration and death camps ?

According to the most reliable estimates the number of the Jewish survivors of concentration and death camps is around 200.000.⁵⁴

Problems Facing the Survivors

What were the primary problems facing the survivors ?

The first problem of liberated camps was one of medical and psychological help. It should be stressed that American , British and Soviet

medical teams did a yeoman work in providing immediate medical help to the survivors. For instance, in Bergen-Belsen, Brigadier General Glynn -Hughes and his team, including volunteer medical students from London, almost all of them non-Jews, saved literally thousands upon thousands of mostly Jewish inmates stricken with typhus and starvation-related diseases immediately upon liberation.⁵⁵

It is clear that, as a result, at Bergen-Belsen the immediate reaction of the survivors was tremendous gratitude to their rescuers, especially the medical team.⁵⁶ There was an immediate reaction after the liberation in searching for relatives. There was also a tremendous urge to establish new families.⁵⁷ Most of the camp survivors were young and those who had been married for the most part lost their spouses and children. It seems that liberation meant nothing if it were not accompanied by a return to quasi-normalcy, exemplified by a new family. In addition, the most urgent emotional need seems to have been to have someone to care for, someone with whom to share one's life.⁵⁸ Religious women insisted on a traditional marriage- symbols of a new security. There was a marriage and a baby boom of considerable proportions.⁵⁹

The Trauma of the Survivors

The Holocaust is the dark core of the history of mankind. It has assumed a place among those events that have permanently shaped the perception of man, that altered the vision of the present and of the prospects for the future.⁶⁰ There is an apocalyptic dimension of trauma in the totality situation of terror in the psychotic cosmos of concentration camps. This non-

descriptive "wasteland" may be described only in the great metaphors of the poet Paul Celan - " *Die Todesfuge*" and other works.⁶¹ The full impact of the Holocaust cannot be understood solely by studying the individual survivor, but can only be fully comprehended by understanding their relationship to their families, and particularly their children. Paradoxically, the Holocaust offers a glimpse of hope for the triumph of life over death and destruction.⁶² The survivors are monuments to man's destructive power untamed by centuries of European civilization. They are, as well, symbols of rebirth and man's efforts to preserve within himself the image of God.⁶³ After the Holocaust, through the survivors, much was learned about the potential in human beings for violence and love, for destruction and rebirth.

How to Enter
the World after
the Holocaust?

In the United States the survivors faced the dilemma of entering of the world after the Holocaust? What will be the reaction of the world to them? Can they share their experiences with their own family, with their children, with their neighbors and communities? Can the enormity of the Holocaust be described?

Many survivors(among other, Simon Wiesenthal, in the last pages of The Murderers Among Us) remember that the SS militiamen enjoyed cynically admonishing the prisoners :

However this war may end, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone went to survive, the world will not believe him. There will perhaps be suspicions, discussions, research by historians, but there will be no certainties, because we will destroy the evidence together with you.

And even if some proof should remain and some of you survive, people will say that the events you describe are too monstrous to be believed; they will say they are exaggerations of Allied propaganda and will believe us, who will deny everything, and not you. We will be the ones to dictate the history of the Lagers.⁶⁴

The Jews who had survived understood that their experiences could not be easily conveyed, if at all. A survivor of Birkenau writes on the 4th of August 1945, to his sister in Palestine: "I realize that you, over there, cannot imagine even a hundredth part of the suffering, fear, humiliation, and every kind of bullying that we lived through... People who live and think as normal people cannot possibly understand."⁶⁵

Survivors Face

Pogroms in Poland

The survivors did not expect to be understood. But they did expect to be allowed to live in peace. It was not to be: within seven months of the end of the war, and after a year in which no German soldier was on Polish soil, 350 Jews had been murdered in Poland.⁶⁶ Thousand more faced danger when they returned to their home and villages. On July 4th, 1946 forty Jews were killed in Kielce, Poland.⁶⁷ Following the Kielce 'pogrom', one hundred thousand Polish Jews, more than half of the survivors, fled from Poland seeking new homes in Palestine, Western Europe, Britain and the United States, Latin America and Australia.⁶⁸

The facts of Jewish wartime suffering were only slowly coming to light, as letters, documents, diaries and fragments were discovered. Vast quantities of material, however, were lost forever, hidden in hiding places no one survived to identify, burned or destroyed by the Germans as they

withdrew. On September 18, 1946 the first of the tin boxes and milk cans hidden by Emanuel Ringelblum ' Joy of Sabbath' circle was dug up in the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto. The second was found four years later , in 1950.⁶⁹

The Burden of Survivors

Many survivors were in Displaced Persons' camps in Germany and in Austria from 1945-1952. Now, fully a half a century after the beginning of the Second World War, the survivors, with a few exceptions have reached the end of their days. They faced the prospect of death and old age separated from their children and grandchildren, and of all the traumas that come with being an aged member of society. The aging survivor carried a double burden ; not only is he/she preoccupied with the question " who loves me?" or " who cares if I live?", these survivors must also ask, " Who will remember me ? Will the memory of my people and of the Holocaust perish?"⁷⁰

The Burden of Survivors' Children

The burden of the aged survivor is no less easy to bear for the children of survivors, the Second Generation. They are caught up not only in the dilemma of having to care for their parents, but they must also face the situation of the survivors' efforts to confront their lives, to integrate their Holocaust experiences into the flow and memory of those lives, to try to come to grips with the fact that they have lost not only loved ones, but an entire civilization and way of life.⁷¹

Recognition of the Holocaust in the United States

The genius of the American soul allowed both the survivors and their children to occupy a unique role in the evolution of Jewish presence in history. The Holocaust and its observance has become, in its rites and rituals, an American concern ; the significance of which had been demonstrated by the Carter Administration's executive order to create a national day for the commemoration of the Holocaust and the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. to be a living memorial to Holocaust victims that would be a learning teaching/ teaching experience. *Yom Hashoah*(Holocaust Remembrance Day) has evolved into one acknowledged by every governor of every state in the U.S., by mayors of cities. Holocaust studies are compulsory in the public schools in many states.

Studies on Survivors and Their Children

Survivors have become a much studied group, both socially and psychologically. Psychiatrists have conducted thousands of hours of research of study to study the intergenerational effects of the Holocaust, to try to understand the transition form and consequences of the harrowing experience of being an "individual in the concentration camp" to being the victim of " the concentration camp in the individual". Among these studies are The Psychological and Medical Effects of Concentration Camps and Related Persecutions on the Survivors of the Holocaust by Leo Eitinger and

Robert Krell, The Legacy of the Holocaust. Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation by Robert M. Prince, Psychoanalytic Reflections on the Holocaust: Selected Essays by Steven A. Luel and Paul Marcus (eds.) and Survivors, Victims and Perpetrators by Joel E. Dimsdale.⁷²

Survivors, children and grandchildren, too, have become the objects of serious attention and study. The conclusion, in various nations where survivors have settled, is that they and their offspring are in serious need of aid from mental health professionals in "recreating" a sense of rootedness, belongingness, and continuity; working through their losses, guilt, rage, and shame; and meaningful integrating the totality of their lives.⁷³

Despite many such conclusions, the great majority of survivors continue live a normal life. Many have become successful professionals and businessmen, artists, writers, scholars and have found a place for themselves and their children in their adopted surroundings. They have been in a way steeled by the experience of survival to endure an uncertain world.

According to Elie Wiesel the survivors wanted to transmit a message to the world, a message of which they were the sole bearers: "having gained an insight into man that will forever remain unequalled, they tried to share a knowledge with the word."⁷⁴

The Conspiracy of Silence

But the survivors found themselves in another kind of exile, another kind of prison. People welcomed them with tears and jobs when they stepped off the boats, then turned away. One Canadian survivors' magazine, nearly two decades after the end of World War II, commented that there are "those people who say- forget what was- forget what went in Europe. This is North

America. You should begin a new life." ⁷⁵ One survivor recounted her first year in America: "My cousins were American born Jews- kind, generous people who also shrank from me a little. You understand, the concentration camp is nothing that endears you to people." ⁷⁶ Shortly after her arrival in America in 1951, one survivor had the experience of being told by her American born Jewish neighbor in Brooklyn that she should write fiction: "You have terrific imagination, the neighbor told her upon hearing a tale about selections and gas chambers". ⁷⁷

In many respects, these attitudes were the beginning of a "conspiracy of silence" between Holocaust survivors and society, a silence that would characterize the lives of most survivors even three decades after their arrival in America. For many Americans, they would be the "refugees" who had come with amazing tales to tell, but who soon stopped talking and interacting with the native American community. ⁷⁸

Survivors' Ideology to "Change the World"

The survivors and especially the organization known as Sheerith Hapletah (the surviving remnant) from the early stages of the DP Camps developed the ideology aimed to change the world and Jewish history. The Free World, the journal of the Feldafing DP camp [which was visited by Eisenhower] stated in 1947: "We, the survivors, the Sheerith Hapletah, must show that we, the victims of Nazism, have always been and will always be the carriers of humanity." ⁷⁹

"*We are here*" was the phrase which best expressed the resolution of the survivors to rebuild their shattered lives. It was the unshakeable belief of what they had seen in the Holocaust, as one survivor stated, was "the end of

creation." Not only was it the indelible memory of horror but also a permanent warning that what the survivors experienced was a pilot project for the destruction of humanity.⁸⁰

In 1947 and in 1948 the ideology of the survivors was crystallized: "Our place [of the survivors] is no longer in Europe. We carry with us the legacy of our millenial history to America and Palestine so that the continuity of our ethical and cultural values may be assured."⁸¹ The survivors were the victims of civilization, and it was they who had been called to discover the positive basis on which we can united with it. "Our [the survivors'] tragedy must become the starting point of a new humanism."⁸² The survivors called upon the world to conquer evil and inhumanity.

Members of the second generation also joined the survivors in the struggle for a word of humanity and morality. Will the imperfect and immoral world listen?

The Journey

Back from Hell

For many survivors new life meant " journey back form hell"⁸³ They were ordinary people who went through the fires of hell and came out with their soul. To understand the achievement of survivors who made the journey back from hell, one must understand specifically what they went through. Psychiatric studies report significant fears continuing or resurfacing. They are fears of noises, even of the telephone bell; of letting children speak too loudly at home.⁸⁴ One survivor treated by a psychiatrist, waking out of dreams at night, does not remember for a long time whether she is really in the USA now or back then in Poland at the time of the persecution. The effect on her nightmares is so terrible that her husband used

to have to take her round the apartment and show her the view of New York from the windows, to convince her that she was not back in the camps.⁸⁵ Another survivor after months of hiding out in the woods, living like beasts, fled westward with her husband, leading one child by the hand, the other at her breast. A stray bullet stroke the baby at her breast and killed her. It was winter in 1944, in Poland. The ground was too hard to bury the baby. The mother had to leave the baby lying on the hard ground. The baby's body stopped the bullet that would otherwise have killed the mother.⁸⁶ Professor Niederland, a leading psychiatrist, identifies what he calls *Seelenmord* (the death of the soul); the state one is reduced to when one can no longer recover from the outrage committed against one's psyche, when one is cut off from "normal people" and "cannot get away from memories"..." Many saved from the clutches of the SS at the last moment are living corpses today."⁸⁷

No Jew has come out of the Holocaust unharmed in terms of self-image; this applies specifically to those who went through the war in Europe, either in hiding, in the camps, in the resistance or in the ghettos. This damaged self-image may also contribute to the guilt that many Jewish survivors, who frequently lost their whole families, feel at having lived.⁸⁸

Survivors Are

Hunted by

Burning Questions

Survivors are haunted by questions. A Holocaust survivor summarized the burning questions of the Holocaust:⁸⁹

The Holocaust is the most horrifying event of twentieth century. Using the latest technology, a modern cultured state massacred

six million Jews and destroyed forever the image of Man. Humanity burned. The world, its responsible citizens and political leaders, civilized countries, intellectuals, humanitarians, soldiers and moral leaders knew and remained silent. Why?

The Holocaust defies answers; however, it poses eternal questions- questions which remain to burn in our hearts. We who are just one generation away from the flames that consumed our grandfathers, grandmothers, mothers and fathers, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters, our children, inherit the questions. It is our legacy , our duty to ask them and pass them on to our children and future generations.

1. When informed, responsible citizens and political leaders knew of the plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe as early as 1941, why were they silent ?
2. With death pursuing them, Jews from all over Europe sought safe haven in the Free World. Why did the civilized world close its gates ?
3. While Jews risked and lost their lives getting information to the world press and media about the atrocities committed by the Nazis and their collaborators, the stories were belittled or ignored. Why did the world close its eyes?
4. When a respected humanitarian organization such as the International Red Cross saw the deprivation suffered by masses of innocent Jewish men , women and children, it failed to live up to its own charter. It denied its own moral obligations when Jews were concerned. Where were the humanitarians?
5. While Allied Forces possessed extensive information about the Death Camps and scores of Jewish soldiers volunteered to fly bombing missions over them, the Nazi death machines were unharmed. Even the railroad tracks leading to the infernos were left intact. Why did our Allies do so little, so late ?
6. And, when Jews cried out in anguish, the Vatican and other churches heard and responded with a deafening silence. Their

moral force would have been a powerful opposition to the Nazi insanity that was sweeping Europe. Where was conscience? morality?

The Death and Rebirth of the Family of the Survivors

During the Holocaust many survivors coped with the prolonged horrors in sustaining hope that after the war they will reunite with their families. Liberation, however, confronted most of the survivors with the knowledge that not only had their family members and friends perished, but sometimes also with horrible circumstances of their death. Despite intense searches, some survivors never discovered what had happened to their loved ones after their separation in the war, while others learned that every single Jewish person they had known before the war had been murdered.

Unable to fully comprehend their tragedy, or to express their grief or rage, the survivors nonetheless had to undertake the task of rebuilding their lives. Recreating a family and bringing a child into the world was a concrete act in attempting to compensate for their losses, to counter the massive disruption of their lives, and to undo the dehumanization and loneliness they had witnessed and experienced.

Almost without exception, the newborn children of survivors were named after those who perished. These children were often viewed as a "blessing", "miracle", "gift", or a symbol of victory over the Nazis. They were to be the future: "safe", "normal", "happy", capable, proud members of the human race.⁹⁰

The Answer to Hitler

A statement from a child of survivors is quite illuminating :91

I was born on November 9, 1960-Kristallnacht. On November 9, 1939, the Nazis went on a rampage, burning, destroying, killing. Form an early age, I felt different from my friends. History weighed heavily on my mind. With an interest that bordered on obsession, I read about the creation of Israel, about the Holocaust, and finally about the Eichmann trial.

My mother calls me her answer to Hitler. The Holocaust happened. Over six million Jews were murdered. I am guilty of the same crime as they were- being Jewish. But my very existence, and that of my two small children, is the best response we can give to Hitler and all anti-Semites. My son is named after his great- uncle, who died in Auschwitz.

When I read some message of hatred, as I did recently that the Holocaust is a hoax, or that the Diary of Anne Frank is a forgery, despair threatens to weaken my resolve- but only momentarily. Than I think of Shaye, my husband's grandfather. My husband never knew a grandparent's love because Hitler had a plan. So Shaye was killed, along with his wife, and many of his children.

Today, there are six Shayes; one in Israel, one in Canada, one in Brazil, and three in New York. There are all strong, devoted, young Jewish men who will keep the memory of Shaye alive... The six Shayes are all answers to Hitler.

Most of the families of survivors are small. The Holocaust deprived them of the normal cycle of the generations of ages and natural death. Each family tree is steeped in death and losses. Yet its offsprings are

expected to re-root that tree and re-establish the extended family.⁹²

How

to Mourn?

Survivors are confronted with the question of mourning. One seventy-four-year old fighter, who re-widowed after the Holocaust and is the sole survivor of a family of seventy-two people, asked: "Even if it takes one year to mourn each loss, and even if I live to a ripe old age (and mourn all members of my family), what do I do about the rest of the six million?"⁹³

Many survivors have the compulsion, rather the need, to return and to revisit the towns of their past life, to gather and rekindle memories in the place of their birth.

A survivor writes in 1990:⁹⁴

The center of my yearning had been Przemyśl, Poland, where I was born. Then, more than fifty years ago, before the outset of World War II, there was a flourishing Jewish community of 20,000; only 300 survived the Holocaust. My friends and relatives of Przemyśl are no more. But there was still a compelling necessity to return to say a Memorial Prayer on the mass grave, where my father, Dr. David Landau, was murdered on July 27, 1942.

We survivors are aging and before we entrust the legacy of remembrance to the next generation, we must remember, we must tell our story. And for that reason, we return- I returned.

I returned to be better able to tell the story of the Jewish culture destroyed in Europe, especially in Poland. My beautiful mother perished in Auschwitz at age 39. I must keep alive the memories of family members who perished during the Holocaust. I returned because the past is with me forever and I cannot escape it.

It was an eerie experience to be walking once more the streets of Przemyśl, my hometown. It was as if I could hear the voices of 20,000 victims. They spoke in unison and pleaded ' Tell about our suffering.'

Like Pompei, Przemyśl is destroyed - sad and gray. Fifty years ago it was bustling with activity, a center of commerce. Everything is ruined.

The Nazi murderers entered Przemyśl on the New Year, September 14, 1939, burned the famous 400 year- old synagogue, and killed 500 Jews. We were later enclosed in a ghetto.. Those were days of suffering. But now I still try to remember some happy images; of my parents, of my famous father, a lawyer and government translator in six languages. Then a child of 10, I look back to the wonderful years of my childhood that gave me strength to overcome adversity and pain, that taught me to love.

I returned to Przemyśl to say the Memorial Prayer on the mass grave. My body shook and trembled, but I have done my duty. I remembered.

I went to Belzec and Majdanek, where 600,000 Jews perished. To camouflage the murders, the Nazis planted a forest. The silence was deafening.

I still carry the images of my visit. They haunt me, and I cannot overcome them. I remember the killers. I remember the six million martyrs. The annihilation of European Jewry must never be forgotten, never be forgiven.

Survivors and
their Children

Special relationship developed between survivors and their children.
The parents wanted to turn over the legacy of the Holocaust to their children.

Survivor parents share a common trait; the feeling that their children could never understand what they went through. The children at the same time grew up without grandparents, aunt and uncles, cousins, sisters, brothers and on and on. Children of survivors were plagued since their early childhood with the weighted responsibility inherent why they made it.

Survivors' Children

See the Suffering
of Their Parents

A child of Holocaust survivors writes :

I wanted so desperately never disappoint my parents as I felt that they had suffered enough in their lifetimes and that anything I may add to that would tear my heart out.

We see your sufferings.

To all those parents, those survivors who don't believe your children will, or do, or could possibly ever understand you- I would like to say, ' *We see you. We see your sufferings. We stand timidly in the shadow of your magnificent survival. And we won't nor could we ever forget.* '

Elie Wiesel believes that no words can ever truly represent the Holocaust, and, similarly, that no one who wasn't there could possibly understand its magnitude. We all know the power of mind... and we all know the lessons we teach our children do not come through words, but through a language of our hearts, our experience, our souls. Because of this, I do believe that many *Second Generation survivors* may in fact have experienced the pain of their parents and of that half a decade of hell on earth somewhere so deeply in our psyches that we can't find the words to assure our parents that we understand. But we do understand. And, we promise, our children will understand too, and that somehow through this painful heritage we must realize that we

and they are the light.. and that our children are the phoenix that has somehow painfully and brilliantly managed to rise from the ashes.⁹⁵

How do Survivors' Children Mourn the Holocaust?

How do children of survivors fight a Nazi enemy who never attacked them? How do they mourn aunts and uncles and grandparents who died before they were born? With whom should they identify when they look at their parents - the victims of persecution or the heroes who overcome mass death? ⁹⁶

These issues still beset the offsprings of Holocaust survivors, many of whom are in their thirties and forties. The essential task of mourning - a process through which the self comes to terms with the possibility of its own annihilation- is immensely complicated by the unique qualities of Nazi mass murder.

It can be an overwhelming prospect when the survivors must mourn an entire community wiped out by the Holocaust, and the children of the second generation are burdened with the loss of those communities. Although their parents may not talk willingly about what they experienced, the ponderous weight of a world destroyed is felt everywhere.⁹⁷ The children of survivors do not mourn a direct loss of someone they loved. It is the memory of someone they feel they had lived with- without ever knowing the person in question- with which they must somehow come to grips.⁹⁸

It is the process of mourning that provides the second generation with a way of incorporating those aspects of their deceased relatives that are

positive and constructive in their present-day lives - rather than identifying with the images of victims or heroes.⁹⁹ Denial of the Holocaust, unfortunately, has proven too easy at every level. Not only is the Holocaust mourner confronted by the overwhelming task of grieving six million horrendous deaths, but there is a further elaboration on the tragedy; there are no graves for the dead. Mass graves and memorial statutes are cold comfort to the Jew who wishes to lay flowers at his mother's stone and imagine that she is there with him. The mourning process often cannot be fully realized because there are so many to grieve for- dozens, hundreds, thousands. For those who believe they are the only survivors of their village, the task is to mourn an entire community.¹⁰⁰

Denial is also active because no one can be sure exactly who survived. Some children were put in monasteries and transferred from place to place; their parents may never have succeeded in tracking them down. Even today, many survivors who travel to a new city still search the telephone book for familiar names. It is very difficult to mourn people who might be still alive, now matter how slim the possibility. Survivors are reluctant to relinquish hope that a parent, a brother or sister may return.¹⁰¹

America Confronts the Holocaust

American Jewry as a whole was not interested in the Holocaust for a long time after World War II. The first formal commemoration of the Holocaust in the United States was not held until 1965 at Temple Emanuel in New York, and it was poorly attended.¹⁰²

One political event which evoked confrontation with the Holocaust was the Eichmann trial. Although it did not have the same national catharsis in

the U.S. as it had in Israel, outraged survivors actively shouldered the responsibility of educating the masses in order to counteract the denial of the Holocaust by American non-survivors. Unlike their counterparts in Europe, Jew in American cities had a communal strength that was powerful enough to initiate their own self-healing.

In 1977 Helen Epstein published an article in the New York Times "Heirs to the Holocaust." Epstein's interviews articulated what a huge number of young people were feeling in isolation. They began to reach out to each other for healing.¹⁰³

Much of institutional importance has happened since 1977 to support American survivor families. President Carter established the Holocaust Memorial Council and with it the National Remembrance Day on the anniversary of the day the American liberated Dachau; Holocaust curricula have become mandatory in an ever-increasing number of high schools; the media has actively presented fictional and factual renderings of the Holocaust; museums and memorials have been built.

As children of survivors struggled through denial to confrontation, they too had a need to do something beyond expressing feeling. Some mourned the past directly by going back to the cities where their relatives lived before the war, or visiting memorial sites where they perished. Some of them became involved in helping the oppressed of today. Once they realized that they are not alone, they could seek out their fellows and become stronger. But the healing cannot occur if they try to forget the Holocaust. Only by remembering it, and adding their part to the continuity of the Jewish people, can the children of survivors come to terms with the enormity of the Holocaust.

A collective tragedy can be healed only by collective mourning. The comfort of community and the spirit that comes from mourning together can

give the second generation the strength to face the responsibility of the past.¹⁰⁴

"Hidden Children"

Special Category

of Survivors

A special category of survivors are the "hidden children." There were thousands of hidden children during World War II. They were hidden for years in sewers, in basements, in attics, and in convents. Many changed their names and their religion to survive. For many years, as they grew into adolescence and manhood, the "hidden children" tried to forget how they escaped annihilation in the hands of the Nazis. They built their new lives in new places, as far from the destruction of their fragile childhood as they could. They tried and succeeded in most cases to live normal lives, to become educated, to find careers, to raise children. They tried to be like other people.

For many years the "hidden children" were silent. It was silence above all that was so important to their survival as children, silence about who they were, silence about their families, their religion, their fears, their hopes, their dreams. For decades, there were pressures within them to break that silence. Yet, somehow all the time they felt somewhat unimportant, even trivial, compared with the six million innocents who perished and with those who survived to tell of the horrors of the ghettos and death camps.¹⁰⁵

The "hidden children" organized a Hidden Child Conference in May 1991. 1600 people attended, among them the eminent Israeli novelist, Aharon Appelfeld. "For the first 50 years after the Holocaust survivors testified to the evil... Now it is time for our generation to bear witness to those who saved us... the goodness"- became the new commitment of the "hidden children."¹⁰⁶

They wanted to celebrate survival and life.

The Holocaust left in its wake many universal questions to which the "hidden children" have no answers. Why did it happen? Why did it happen to them? Why was the world silent? Why did a million and half children perish? Why didn't the Almighty intervene?

For each survivor, there are additional personal questions. Why did he/she survive when a million and half Jewish children perished? For many parents, there were other haunting questions every day of their existence. Why did they survive and not others in their families?

For many hidden children the haunting question of survival will be with them all their waking days and dreams. Therefore, as the hidden children proclaim life, they also mourn. They say Memorial Prayer (*Kaddish*) for a million and half children who are silent forever and who only live through their remembrance. They also remember those children who, like Anne Frank, were hidden but did not survive. Most of the children, unlike Anne Frank, lived in silence and died in silence. The hidden children want to speak for them.¹⁰⁷

There is yet another group of "hidden children" who are silent. They are those who are alive today. Their parents perished and their rescuers have, for many reasons, not informed them that they are Jewish. In several countries, it is not a source of pride to admit publicly that one has rescued a Jewish child. There are still some Jewish children in Eastern Europe who survived as hidden children, know their identity, but are afraid to admit that they are Jews.

Why did the "hidden children" wait so long? Why did it take 50 years to gather together, and to speak up? There are no simple answers. First, as children and adolescents, the hidden children were sheltered-sheltered from the pain of knowing who they really are. As they

matured, they sheltered themselves, frequently unwilling or unable to communicate with their parents or their guardians, or their new families and friends. Then, for another 10 or 15 years, they were silent because they wanted to shelter their children from those truths. During those years, they struggled alone with their anger, their loneliness, their embarrassment, and their guilt.¹⁰⁸

Many "hidden children" declared that they have a mission- a mission to proclaim and recognize goodness: " For the 50 years after the Holocaust, survivors bore witness to evil, brutality, and bestiality. Now it is time for us, for our generation, to bear witness to goodness. For each one of us is living proof that even in hell, even in that hell called Holocaust, there was goodness, there was kindness, and there was love and compassion."¹⁰⁹

The legacy of hidden childhood, however, is also manifested that hidden children did suffer significant damage even if it does not show. A childhood that ends much too early inevitable takes a toll on the adult. These children could not have known the strength and resourcefulness they needed in order to survive would actually become liabilities to them later on in life. Some of them still struggling with identity,, alienation, getting close to anyone even in their families, asserting themselves, feeling of isolation and numbness. A hidden child, who hid, first under her mother's bed in a Polish concentration camp and then in a bunker under a potato field, calls the numbness and isolation " The Glacier Effect": " When we experience layer on layer of trauma, we must have something glazed over us; a deep freeze. I think I was stunned for forty years because the cumulative shock was that great."¹¹⁰

The hidden past marked the "hidden children" psychologically and emotionally just as the Auschwitz number tattooed on the arm marked the Auschwitz survivors physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

The Third Generation

Today there is also a third generation. A 17 year old third generation member writes about his relationship with his grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, and a visit they made together to Poland:¹¹¹

... We went next to see the concentration camps of Auschwitz, Birkenau, Treblinka and Majdanek. Though I had seen many movies and read numerous books about the camps, nothing came close to actually being there. My first reaction was one of disbelief, horror and outrage. Beds consisted of wooden planks no wider than four to five feet. Six to eight people slept on each one. Six hundred people slept in one room without any toilets or water. One never knew if one's bunkmates would be alive the next morning. There were still ashes in the crematorium, and the stench of death was pervasive. How could one human being place another in an oven! How could men kill children!

Treblinka was most meaningful to us because my grandmother's two brothers, both handsome and young men, were exterminated there. We lit a memorial candle and said a prayer. I felt profoundly saddened never to have met so many of my relatives.

There are so many thoughts in my head when I think about this trip. The will to survive that my grandparents and all Holocaust survivors possessed is a miracle. When I look at them now, I am overwhelmed with a new respect for them because of what they have been through. One cannot walk away viewing the remnant of such evil without vowing, 'Never Again'. However, the most important thing is that it is a miracle that I exist! Had I been born then, I could easily have been one of the many strong seventeen years old forced to do hard labor until I died from disease or was gassed. I would have been worried every night about the fate of my parents and my brother.

There have been at Choate times when I have thought my room was a cell. Sometimes, when I was stressed out by exams and pressures, I actually said to myself, ' This is hell. ' I know better now. Now I have seen what hell on earth really is, and because the example of my grandfather and many like him, I have the inner strength to persevere, survive, and make the best of my situation on this earth.

The Legacy

The Legacy of the Holocaust Survivors and The Pledge of Acceptance of the Second Generations was adopted at the World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem on June 18, 1981.

*THE LEGACY*₁₁₂

WE TAKE THIS OATH ! We take it in the shadow of flames whose tongues scar the soul of our people. We vow in the name of dead parents and children; we vow, with our sadness hidden, our faith renewed; we vow, we shall never let the sacred memory of our perished Six Million be scorned or erased.

WE SAW THEM hungry, we saw them to rush to battle, we saw them in the loneliness of the night- true to their faith. At the treshhold of death, we saw them. We received their silence in silence, merged their tears with ours.

Deportations, executions, mass-graves, death camps; mute prayers, cries of revolt, desperation, torn scrolls; cities and towns, villages and hamlets; the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the ghetto fighters and partisans, scholars and messianic dreamers, ravaged faces, first raised. Like clouds of fire, all have vanished.

WE TAKE THIS OATH! Vision becomes word, to be handed down from father to son, from mother to daughter, from

generation to generation.

REMEMBER what the German killers and their accomplices did to our people. Remember them with rage and contempt. Remember what an indifferent world did to us and to itself. Remember the victims with pride and with sorrow. Remember also the deeds of the righteous Gentiles.

WE SHALL ALSO REMEMBER the miracle of the Jewish rebirth in the State of Israel and the miracle of The Sheerith Hapletah in the United States.

WE TAKE THIS OATH IN JERUSALEM, our eternal spiritual sanctuary. Let our legacy endure as stone of the Temple Wall. For here prayers and memories burn. They burn and burn and will not be consumed.

THE ACCEPTANCE 113

WE ACCEPT the obligation of this legacy.

WE ARE the first generation born after darkness. Through our parents' memories, words and silence, we are linked to that annihilated Jewish existence whose echoes permeate our consciousness.

WE DEDICATE this pledge to you, our parents who suffered and survived;

to our grandparents who perished in the flames;

to our vanished brothers and sisters, more than one and half million Jewish children, so brutally murdered;

to all Six Million whose unyielding spiritual and physical resistance, even in the camps and ghettos, exemplifies our people's commitment to life.

WE PLEDGE to remember!

WE SHALL TEACH our children to preserve forever that uprooted Jewish spirit which could not be destroyed.

WE SHALL TELL the world of the depths to which humanity can sink, and the heights which were attained, even in hell itself.

WE SHALL FIGHT anti-Semitism and all form of racial hatred by our dedication to freedom throughout the world.

WE AFFIRM our commitment to the State of Israel and to the furtherance of Jewish life.

WE PLEDGE ourselves to the oneness of the Jewish people.

WE ARE YOUR CHILDREN! WE ARE HERE !

The legacy of the survivors is summarized in the eloquent words of Elie Wiesel: " In an age tainted by violence, we must teach coming generations of the origins and consequences of violence. In a society of bigotry and indifference, we must tell our contemporaries that whatever the answer, it must grow out of human compassion and reflect man's relentless quest for justice and memory; and we must insist again and again that it is the Jews who carries that message of humanity to mankind." ¹¹⁴

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CHAPTER 11

After the Holocaust

In The Beginning

There Was Silence...

In the beginning, after the Holocaust there was silence. The subject was not taught in schools and was barely mentioned in novels and films and history books. The survivors lived in Displaced Persons Camps and after their settling especially in Israel and in the United States they lived in isolation. Americans including American Jews, perhaps, were ashamed of their own passivity of not having done more to save those they had left in Europe; Israelis were ashamed of the supposedly passive victims "who like lambs to their slaughter." National and international events overshadowed the concern with the Holocaust.

The Silence

is Broken

The silence was first broken with the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem in 1961. The Six-Day War of Israel in 1967 and Israel's victory emboldened American Jews to confront the fate of European Jewry during the Holocaust; while paradoxically, Israel's isolation in the weeks before the victory and the years afterwards made Israelis feel less self-confident, and more able to identify with the aloneness of Europe's Jews. Holocaust organizations increased the efforts to share with others the trauma of the Holocaust. In 1979 President Carter established the Holocaust Memorial Commission of

the United States and declared April 29, the day when Dachau was liberated, as Holocaust Remembrance Day to be observed. In 1981 the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors took place in Jerusalem. Consequently The American Gathering/ Federation of the Jewish Holocaust Survivors was organized. The National Registry of Holocaust Survivors was established.

New Light on the Holocaust Babi Yar

Historiography of the Holocaust shed new light on many aspects of the Holocaust.

Barely four miles from center of Kiev, the Ukraine's ancient and beautiful capital, is a place called Babi Yar. Once a deep, wooded ravine through which a small stream ran, Baby Yar is now filled in, and open space with brambly growth and few lonely trees.

There, on September 29 and 30, 1941, the invading and occupying forces of Hitler's Third Reich murdered 33,771 Jewish men, women, and children.¹ But the eeriness at Babi Yar is not just that of a vast necropolis. The Jewish dead hover over the desolate field in a perpetual purgatory of historical denial. For the Soviet Government had ordered that the memory of their murder be erased from the records and the minds of the Russians, a situation which existed until 1991. In September 1991, a bronze menorah (candleabra) was set up at the site of the mass murder, and the Ukrainian government, which had in the meantime declared independence from Moscow, held commemorative memorial ceremonies that included delegations from the United States, Europe, and Israel.²

In the same Ukraine between 1918 and 1921 some 350 Jewish

communities endured more than 1200 pogroms. About 60,000 Jews were murdered; many more were injured and crippled. Some Jewish communities were completely obliterated, leaving no living survivors or standing houses.³ With the German occupation ancient prejudices were unloosed. Thus, soon as the Jews of Kiev had left their homes for the assembly place on September 29, some Ukrainians began to plunder the abandoned houses. Others were quick to betray Jews in hiding- even children- and hand them over to the Germans.⁴

The killing at Babi Yar continued for many months. By November 3, 1941, the commandant of *Einsatzgruppe C* reported, about 75,000 Jews had been shot at Babi Yar.⁵ While no precise figures are known, it is estimated that of 100,000 people murdered at Babi Yar within the next twelve months, some 90,000 were Jews.⁶

Babi Yar was a Jewish gravesite, but for fifty years the Soviet regime did not acknowledge it. The "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem"- the German code name for the murder of European Jews- was a nonsubject in Soviet history. Virtually no Soviet account of the war has ever recorded the fundamental information that the Germans singled out the Jews for annihilation. All Soviet wartime losses, on the battlefield as behind the lines, are merged into the category of "Soviet citizens", and no distinction were made about the particular fate of any group.

Why it was necessary to erase from Soviet history the record of the Jews in World War II, including the horror of Babi Yar? The decision was part of a dramatic change in the direction of postwar Soviet domestic and foreign relations, which turned anti-Semitism into a major instrument of policy.⁷

Throughout the Soviet Union, there had been varying levels of collaboration with the German invaders. Some ethnic groups were punished

severely. But in the Ukraine the wartime defection had been so widespread that the central government felt compelled to adopt a policy of pacification and reconciliation. Historians believe that the regime sought to appease these former collaborators by demonstrating that it shared their hatred of the Jews.⁸

Anti-Semitism as a government policy also served the postwar foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union. The wartime Grand Alliance gave way to the cold war. Everything Western was condemned. Russian nationalism took precedence over all other regional and ethnic loyalties. Because so many Soviet Jews were preoccupied with the experience of their suffering as Jews, because they were traumatized by the murder of six million European Jews, because they sought the comfort of association with Jews elsewhere in the world; they were now accused of being unpatriotic, of being "rootless", of being "cosmopolitans."⁹

In 1958 a change came into Soviet Jewish life. Jews emerged from the terrible years of Stalin and Babi Yar made many Jews aware of their Jewishness, even though few of the younger people knew anything of Jewish history or culture. They were also thrilled with the existence of a sovereign Jewish state.

Jewish solidarity was celebrated-in violation of Soviet law. In Kiev, too, Jews sought to express their identity. In keeping with Jewish tradition, their first concern was to sanctify the mass graves at Babi Yar and to hold memorial services for their murdered relatives.

By 1958, Babi Yar had become a pasture for cattle. When Krushchev had been Communist party boss in the Ukraine right after the war, he had turned down proposals for a memorial to the murdered Jews. In 1957, the idea for a monument came up again. But when the authorities studied the statistics of those who had died there and saw that any memorial would have

to recognize the preponderance of Jewish victims, they once again vetoed the suggestion. Instead, they undertook to fill the ravine and build a sports stadium.¹⁰ In the process, engineers constructed a dam that turned the ravine into a huge lake. As the operation continued the level of the dam was raised until, by the beginning of 1961, the dam had reached the height of six-story building. On March 13, 1961, torrential spring rains caused the dam to overflow. Moments later, a thirty-foot tidal wave of mud poured into Kiev.¹¹ The New York Times correspondent put the number of deaths at 145 and estimated the injuries at about the same number.¹²

In Kiev people said: "Babi Yar takes its revenge." Peasants went to church to light candles and pray for the souls of the murdered Jews. Orthodox priests conducted memorial services for the victims of the tidal wave and for the Jews killed twenty years earlier. Soviet officialdom wanted to deny the statistics and rewrite history, but everyone in Kiev knew that most of the dead of Babi Yar were Jews.¹³

More than a million Jews had been killed by Germans at dozen Babi Yars throughout the Soviet Union, and these Jewish death continued to haunt the population. The young Ukrainian poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, wrote a poem "Babi Yar". The poem was published in the Soviet Union's leading literary journal, Literaturnaya Gazeta, and was read and admired across the nation. It began:

There are no memorials at Babi Yar-
The steep slope is the only gravestone.
I am afraid.
Today I am as old as the Jewish people.
It seems to me now that I am a Jew.

Let the "Internationale" ring out
When the last anti-Semite on earth is buried.

There is no Jewish blood in mine,
 But I am hated by every anti-Semite as a Jew,
 I am a true Russian.¹⁴

Undaunted, the Kiev authorities in 1962 resumed work at Babi Yar. The plan for the sport stadium was abandoned ; instead, the area was simply to be filled and levelled off. The bulldozers were dispatched. They kept turning up bones tangled in barbed wire. After four years, the project was done : Babi Yar was erased. The old Jewish cemetery nearby was also leveled and a television center erected on its grounds. Apartment houses were built near the site. The rest of the area remained desolate.¹⁵

Every year, thereafter, on September 29, the Jews of Kiev came to commemorate the murdered dead and to recite the Memorial Prayer (*Kaddish*), for their relatives. Each year, the local police dispersed the mourners. It took fifty years for the Soviets officially acknowledge the horror of Babi Yar, but there are still few official Soviet sources that document the murders at Babi Yar. One is the note of Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov, dated January 6, 1942, addressed to the Ambassadors of all countries with which Moscow maintained diplomatic relationship, headed " Regarding the Wholesale Looting, Ruin of the Population and Monstrous Atrocities Perpertrated by the German Authorities on Soviet Territories Seized by Them." He specifically refers to Jews as the primary victims of the Einsatzgruppen at Kiev.¹⁶

The Gatekeepers
 of the Holocaust

There are hundreds of Babi Yars all over Europe. There are 500,000 graves in the Warsaw Jewish cemetery. There is one last remaining

synagogue in Warsaw.¹⁷ The Polish community of Poland was described as a "paradise for Jews," the world center of Jewish religion, thought, literature, art and politics. In 1800 three quarters of all Jews in the world lived in Poland. In 1939 the three and a half million Polish Jews formed the second-largest diaspora of Jews after the United States.¹⁸ In 1990 about 6,000 to 10,000 Jews are in Poland, a depleted, exhausted, and cowering remnant of a remnant.¹⁹

The Remembrance of the Warsaw Ghetto

The fate of the Warsaw Ghetto after the war was similar in some way to Babi Yar. In the center of Grzybowksi Square, which was the center of the ghetto, today a triangular island is crisscrossed with pedestrian paths and shaded by tall trees. The island is surrounded by deceout red-brick structures that somehow survived the war, offices and apartments built after 1945, and a massive church with two towering spires.²⁰

"The Jews of Warsaw are accorded a task by civilization: they are the gatekeepers of the Holocaust.²¹ All survivors (and who is not a survivor? who enter Poland's world of Night must pass them first. The clothes they wore could pass as well in the 1930's as in the 1950's; they live near Treblinka, near Majdanek, near Auschwitz; unlike American or Israeli survivors, they cannot wash the death out of their hair. The Warsaw Jews live with memories of the infants they watched thrown out of the upper-story windows of the ghetto, of the hangings, of lice, of child-beggars swaying slowly on the curbs in death swoons of hunger. Their stories of horror is reflected in their faces and in their eyes. They still walk the city with the

ghosts of the past. Poland is not a place for living Jews." ²²

Return to Majdanek

Two rooms highlight Majdanek for the visitor of this infamous death camp in Poland; each overbearing in its intimation of corpulence, of bodies that are heavy and drag themselves. Death resides in Majdanek, and never will leave Majdanek.

The first room is a shower room- a real one, with pipes and showers, and in a corner, a massive grey concrete bath in which several people could immerse themselves. "When bodies are warm and moist"- guides in Majdanek explain- "the Zyklon B gas works better." Many survivors felt that this chambers were "not for the dressed of this world", and their visit to gas chambers was showing lack of respect for the dead. ²³

The second room is just before the crematorium, which in Majdanek is a mile and half from the gas chambers. The sole object in this room is a large table made of the same grey concrete than the grey concrete bath in the shower room. It has drain in its recessed center and water pipes around its perimeter. Its size and height is reminiscent of a billiard table, but here all resemblance end- for the dissection table is indescribably ugly. ²⁴

"Prisoners suspected of swallowing valuables were dissected here"- guides in Majdanek explain. The table becomes the quintessential symbol of Majdanek, for what characterized Majdanek more than all other death camps was the insatiable, brutal greed of its staff. Even the Nazis punished the camp administration for its corruption when it came to dispensing the gold teeth and valuable of the inmates. After the war only 20 percent of the camp employees were brought to trial. ²⁵ All kinds of people are still rich in

Poland because of Majdanek. They live in homes built from the wealth of Jewish gems extracted on the table next to the crematorium.

Majdanek, the most personally lucrative camp also has the biggest monument. The hill made up of the recovered ashes of the victims of Majdanek, at the camp's edge, weights seven tons. An inverted Seventh Well (Be'er Sheva) overlooking what was the Talmud study center of Eastern Europe, an ulcer on the face of the earth that is the most palpable contact a visitor can have with Hitler's victims in Majdanek.²⁶

The New National Park-Auschwitz

Auschwitz, the most infamous death camp of all history, today is a national park. There is a restaurant, friendly tour guides, trees for shade, a souvenir shop, plenty of public bathrooms and drinking water. There is a nice parking lot at the entrance.

As Auschwitz lied to the world, as it succeeded in hiding, so it lies to the visitors today. A visitor described his visit the following way:²⁷

We looked straight at it, we entered its bowels, we stood almost mindlessly at the spot where Mengele made his selections, our hands touched the crematoria, we took shade in the barracks, and still we didn't see Auschwitz. Partly, of course, because the Auschwitz that burned my grandmother is no longer there; but partly because Auschwitz hides. Only when I left, weeks later in Boston, did I realize, did I feel where I had been.

The hiding, then, begins with the parking lot. It is really a wonderful parking lot, semicircular, and filled with luxury buses from over Europe with air conditioning and pleasure seats. Hardly the way my grandmother entered Auschwitz. That entrance, the *Arbeit Macht Frei* entrance is part of the Museum, and museums, in the Polish eye, are there not just to

certify artifacts but to relegate them to the past.

The message, then, of the new gateway to Auschwitz- the parking lot- is that death lies beyond these walls, the killing factory that killed three to four million people in three years, is of the past and not of the present. Its crimes didn't happen in the 1940's, they happened in the Middle Ages; they were perpetrated not by doctors and university professors who rode on the same trolley cars that still run in Warsaw and Berlin, folks who went to movies in the evenings and church on Sunday, but by the Attilas of some distant era. Its tortures - and these are what our emotionless guide emphasizes- were done in a time warp that absents itself from modernity.

We had a survivor with us, 73 years old and still beautiful, her eyes clear and voice steady. with her son at her side. We all stood together at the crematorium where her two young children went to their deaths, and standing there we saved Auschwitz from the Polish people... Our guide was displeased that our survivor was articulate, and sharing her hell with us.

The barracks in Birkenau, which were built on wooden foundations, are collapsing. Workers are building new ones. The toilets, too, are being rebuilt; a large concrete oval with perhaps 50 adjacent circular holes for women to sit on. As we wonder whether the Poles will repaint the interior, and as we are told for third time- that women collected the human feces by hand and brought them to a small plant in Birkenau where they were used to manufacture methane gas, our survivor asks to go to the block where the prisoners washed.

'There is nothing to see,' our guide says smartly. By this time we have realized that were we to have left matters in his hands, we would not have seen Birkenau altogether. We ignore him and go to the wash house. In its center, another oval affair, perhaps 15 feet long, with garden hose faucets staring into the cavernous concrete sink every foot and a half. It is clear that the cells and pits and ovens and chambers and gallows of Auschwitz-

Birkenau, it is this room with its faucets that holds the most positive memories for our survivor. 'I told you there was nothing to see' say our guide.

The Carmelite Convent is just outside the main museum area of Auschwitz. It is a desecration of memory, and should not be there. (The convent is now being transferred to a location outside but next to the walls of Auschwitz- author.) But far worse is a room in the basement of one of the museums ; the block that was the military prison. Here , in a crucial isolation cell, we notice in passing a large wreath and a crucifix. This was the cell, where Father Kolbe was held. ' You remember, ' our guide reminds us, ' the priest whom the Pope beatified because he gave up his life to save another here in Auschwitz. ' Well, we certainly remembered Kolbe. We remembered his weekly magazine, The Night of the Immaculate, as being a rabidly anti-Semitic tract, and we remembered that here, here in Auschwitz the Pope himself had come and established a shrine for this anti-Semite.

How many rabbis came to their end in Auschwitz ? How many hundreds of Hassidic masters? How many Holy Men and Women from up and down Poland? There is no shrine for even a single one of them, nor even a chapel where a Jews can recite a prayer .

And so despite its memories, Poland turns out not to be a quick fix for remembering the Holocaust. Perhaps it is because some of its people are only just beginning to come to terms with the catastrophe they helped both house and author- the place that is called Auschwitz is being repaired, synagogues are being restored and the tour guides are for the most part struggling with what describe. Yet notwithstanding the immaturity, the anti-Semitism, and the violent offensiveness of some of the iconography- the decals of Kolbe shrines-, there is surely an issue here that is not unique to Poland, and which, Poland alone, perhaps, need to solve, and that is to find the forms that will protect memory without offending it.

The Trauma of
the " Bitburg Affair "
for the Survivors

How should a nation and government deal with the Nazi past ? For America, this crucial question came into forefront in the Bitburg Affair under President Reagan .

In the spring of 1985, a decision that had been made in a quite conversation in a private White House drawing room between President Reagan and Chancellor Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) erupted into a fierce public debate. Before it was executed, the decision drew vigorous dissent from bipartisan political groups, organizations of Nazi survivors, senators, congressmen, veterans, and religious and ethnic groups of every shade and color in the United States, as well as comments in all major countries, including many behind the Iron Curtain.

The conflict stemmed from the announcement that President Reagan would accept an invitation from West Germany's Chancellor Kohl to engage in a symbolic act of reconciliation between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany. The decision of the leaders of these two powerful countries was the first in the modern history of American-German relations to cause such a fundamental political questioning and soul-searching. The affair became known as the " BitburgAffair".

The act of reconciliation was to consist of a handshake and the laying of a wreath at the site of a military cemetery where American and Germans soldiers are buried. (Apparently, no one involved knew at that time that there are no American soldiers buried in the Bitburg cemetery.)²⁸ At the early

stages there was also a suggestion that President Reagan visit a concentration camp; Dachau was a possible site.²⁸ Later on President Reagan decided that he would not visit a concentration camp and stated publicly on March 21, 1985 that such a visit " would reawaken the memories..and the passions of the time." ²⁹ In an interview with The Washington Post, the President reaffirmed that he would not visit a concentration camp. He said, of course, " we should never forget the Holocaust," but added that the bulk of German citizens had not gone through the experience of World War II.³⁰ When an advance team was engaged in finding a suitable German military cemetery, they were assured by the Kohl team that there were no " painful surprises" in the Bitburg cemetery.³¹

Had the American advance team and Kohl's advisers researched the site, they would have discovered the fact which would upset Holocaust survivors, Jews in general, veterans, politicians and concerned men and women around the world. It was learned from a non-White House source that located in the small cemetery of Bitburg were the graves of members of the infamous Waffen SS.³² On April 19, 1945 President Reagan announced that he would visit a concentration camp too. His choice at this time was Bergen-Belsen. Elaborating on this , President Reagan said : " I thought that there was no way that I, as a guest of the government [of the Federal Republic of Germany]... could on my own take off and go some place, and then, run the risk of appearing as I was trying to say to Germans, ' Look what you did,' and all this when most of the people in Germany today weren't even alive or were very small children when this was happening.³³ The scope of this last statement about German responsibility was expanded at a state dinner for Algerian President Schadli, when President Reagan explained that most of the Waffen SS buried in Bitburg were just 17 or 18 years old at the time

and thus were as much victims of Nazism as the inmates of the concentration camps.³⁴

The shock of hearing the president equating criminals and victims was felt around the world. On April 15, 53 U.S. Senators appealed to President Reagan to drop the intended visit to Bitburg.³⁵ Four days later on April 19, at a ceremony in the White House where he was receiving the Congressional Gold Medal, the chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, Elie Wiesel, implored the president not to visit Bitburg.³⁶ Two day later, several thousands survivors gathered in Philadelphia and denounced President Reagan's trip to Bitburg as obscene.³⁷ Four days later, 257 members of the House of Representatives signed a letter to Chancellor Kohl urging him to withdraw his invitation.³⁸ The next day the Senate passed a resolution urging President Reagan to reconsider his itinerary.³⁹

In spite of the gathering storm, President Reagan remained unshaken in his determination not to back down from the planned itinerary. Moreover, on April 23, 1985, he stated that the visit to the cemetery of Bitburg was "morally right." He would maintain his full assurance that he was doing the right thing up to and after his visit to Bitburg.⁴⁰

Hunting Questions about Bitburg

Part of the Bitburg conflict centered around the issue of the deeds of Nazi Germany- the epitome of evil- as they were relegated to the realm of conventional politics. President Reagan's call for reconciliation above the military graves was an effort to stage a symbolic act of reconciliation with the present Germans without regard to any inherent responsibility on their

part in the Nazi atrocities. However, this staging- which was questionable in its need and timing took place over the symbols of the Nazi regime, and thus contributed to the dilution of the absolute evil and incorporation of this act into the realm of conventional politics. The proposed visit to Bitburg, was perceived by many as the legitimization of the atrocities performed by the Third Reich against the Jews.

There are many questions related to the " Bitburg Affair" : morality and politics, forgetting and forgiving, the rise of nationalism and patriotism which in Germany are tinged by the atrocities committed by the Third Reich.

Addresses and
Commentaries
About Bitburg

Because of the magnitude and importance of the "Bitburg affair" some major addresses and commentary are presented herewith.

The Address of
President Reagan

President Reagan awarding Holocaust writer Elie Wiesel with
Congressional Gold Medal at the White House, April 19, 1985 stated: 41

Jewish people have just finished celebrating Passover, the holiday that marks the exodus from Egypt, the deliverance from slavery. But this week, we commemorate a nondeliverance, a time when exodus was refused, when the doors of refugee were closed and in their place came death. In the Passover narrative, the *Haggadah*, there the phrase, ' In every generation, they rise

up us against us to annihilate us.' In the generation of the Holocaust, the annihilation nearly succeeded in Europe. Six million killed, among them over a million children.

How does life continue in the face of this crime against humanity?

The survivors swore their oath, "Never again." And the American people also made that pledge, "Never Again", and we've kept it.

But our pledge was more than 'Never Again.' It was also 'Never Forget.'

From the ashes of the Holocaust emerged the miracle of Israel and another miracle- that the survivors began life again. They came to new lands, many to Israel and many, thank God, to America. They built new families and with each child gave us the greatest symbol of this faith in the future. They brought us the eloquence of a people who, in surviving such suffering, asked only for the right to remember and be remembered. A people who did not permit themselves into the pits of and quagmires of hatred but lifted themselves instead, and with them all humankind, out of darkness, up toward a time when hatred is no more and all nations and all people are one.

We who had not suffered the tragedy of the Holocaust directly shared their grief and mourned their victims. We too prayed for a better future and a better world where all peoples and all nations would come together in peace and defense of humanity!

Today, there is a spirit of reconciliation between the peoples of the allied nations and the peoples of Germany and even between the soldiers who fought each other on the battlefields of Europe. That spirit must grow and be strengthened. As the people of Europe rebuilt their shattered lands, the survivors rebuilt their shattered lives, and they did so despite the searing pain. And we who are their fellow citizens have taken up their memories and tried to learn from them what we must do...

And let all of us, Jews and non-Jews alike, pledge ourselves today to the life of the Jewish dream, to a time when war is no more, when all nations live in peace, when each man, woman and child lives in the dignity that God intended.

The Address

of Elie Wiesel 42

Mr. President... We were never on two sides. We were on the same side. We were always on the side of justice, always on the side of memory, against the SS and against what they represent.

... This medal is not mine alone. It belongs to all those who remember what the SS`killers have done to their victims...

... I feel responsible for the living, I feel equally responsible for the dead. Their memory dwells in my memory.

Forty years ago, a young man awoke and he found himself an orphan in orphaned world. ... In the last forty years I learned the perils of language and those of silence. I learned that in extreme situations when human lives and dignity are at stake, neutrality is a sin. It helps the killers, not the victims. I learned the meaning of solitude, Mr. President. We were alone, desperately alone.

Mr. President, you spoke of Jewish children. One and half million Jewish children perished. I spent my entire life reciting their names, I would die before finishing the task... I have seen children being thrown in the flames alive... I have learned the fragility of human condition...

I have learned that the Holocaust was a unique and uniquely Jewish event, albeit with universal implications. Not all victims were Jews. But all Jews were victims. I have learned the danger of indifference, the crime of indifference. For the opposite of love, I have learned, is not hate, but indifference. Jews were killed by the enemy, but betrayed by their so-called allies, who found political reasons to justify their indifference or passivity.

May I, Mr. President, if it's all possible at all, implore you to do something else, to find a way, go find another way, to find another site? *That place [Bittburg], Mr. President, is not your place. Your place is with the victims of the SS.* [Author's emphasis]

Oh, we know there are political and strategic reasons, but this issue, as all issues related to that awesome event, transcends politics and diplomacy. The issue is here not politics, but good and evil. And we must never confuse them. For I have seen the SS at work. And I have seen their victims. They were my friend. They were my parents. [The world of the SS] was terror, fear, isolation, torture, gas chambers, flames, flames rising to the heavens.

Letter of Congressmen

to President Reagan: 43

President Ronald Reagan April 19, 1985
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing with respect to your upcoming visit to Germany from April 30-May 10. Although we recognize your desire to work toward full reconciliation with our German allies, we believe it is inappropriate to visit the cemetery in Bitburg, where soldiers from the elite Nazi guard, the SS, are buried. We believe that a ceremony at this cemetery would be a dishonor to the American soldiers who fought to save the world from Hitler's deadly campaign, as well for the victims of the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis.

Co-signed by 54 Congressmen

Senator Kennedy

at the Senate

Senator Edward Kennedy in the United States Senate on April 26, 1985

declared:44

I join Senator Specter, Senator Metzenbaum, Senator Cranston and others in asking the Senate to adopt our resolution which urges the President not to visit the German military cemetery in Bitburg...President Reagan's plan to lay a wreath at the Bitburg military cemetery contradicts the important purpose of his trip to Europe. It makes a travesty of reconciliation. It reopens old wounds, offends American veterans who fought bravely in the war, and dishonors the memory of millions of victims of the Nazis who died in the Holocaust....

We all know the reason why Bitburg is not the President's place. In the words of the Passover song, *Dायenu* [it would have been enough in Hebrew], any one of these reasons would have been enough. The 19,900 American killed and the 77,000 wounded during the Battle of the Bulge would have been enough. Nazi SS graves in the cemetery would have been enough. And Chancellor Kohl's declaration Monday that Germans bear a "never ending shame for the Holocaust, the greatest crime in history, would have been enough.

Listen to the names of some of the cities and towns Jews lived and died during the Holocaust: Warsaw, Kiev, Babi Yar, Amsterdam, Lublin, Czernowitz, Ponary, Nuremberg, Riga, Lvov, Vilna, Lodz, Kovno, Minsk, Radom.

And listen to the names of death camps and the message they send to us across the years ; Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Majdanek, Treblinka, Landsberg, Flossenbug, Nordhausen, Torgau, Ohrdruf, Ravensbruck, Sachsenhausen, Lenta, Kaiserwald, Oranienburg, Neuengamme, Papenburg, Stutthof, Grossfrosen, Mauthausen, Ebensee, Theresienstadt, Sered, Drancy, Chelmno, Sobibor, Belzec.

These are haunting names whose history is forever embedded in the soul of humanity. They are names that will stand for all eternity as symbols of the tyranny and massive cruelty the Nazis and their systematic and brutal attempts to exterminate the

Jewish people and all minorities.

All of us are survivors, and as survivors we understand that are times when faith and hope are difficult. In the words of the *Kaddish*, the ancient Hebrew prayer of sanctification for the dead :

May there be abundant peace from Heaven and life, for us and for all Israel. He who creates peace in High places, may he create peace for us and for all Israel

Survivor's Address

at Arlington

National Cemetery

Arlington Address by Holocaust Survivor- Arlington National Cemetery, May 5, 1985, while President Reagan was laying a wreath in Bitburg:⁴⁵

Today we gather here, on this sacred ground of Arlington Cemetery, to pay tribute at the Shrine of the American Soldier, to remember and honor those heroic young men and women.

Forty years ago, during the darkest moments of our lives, in the death camps, in the ghettos and in the forests, when we felt most alone, we hoped and prayed not be left abandoned by the world, that somehow our messages would be received and our voices would be heard, Somehow, we would be saved by men and women of decency and courage. Your presence here today, and that of the distinguished Christian clergy alongside us, demonstrates that today we are not alone.

The Holocaust was the darkest chapter of our century, of all centuries. It is darkness, an abyss which we dare not to avert our gaze, if future generations shall continue to live in freedom.

We must never forget the lessons of the Holocaust, not its victims, nor indeed can we forget the *murderers*. Their crimes must never be forgotten.

As Americans and Jews, we seek reconciliation among the nations because we know full well the consequences of tyranny, war, hatred, and bigotry. But there can no reconciliation between the murderers and their victims. We must not betray the memories of our martyrs.

Sadly, we live in a world of images. The image of an American President, however well intentioned, at a German cemetery where soldiers are buried, including Nazi elite SS officers and concentration camp guards, send the wrong signal to the world. It say to future generations ; all these men are the same ; all were engaged in an honorable struggle.

We have seen our leaders go to great pains to separate the evil of Nazism from the German people as whole. We must remember that the Nazis did not operate in a vacuum. While there were exceptions, and we acknowledge and honor these exceptions, the German nation was willingly mobilized to carry out Nazi policies, and therefore shares in the moral responsibility for the destruction they brought.

The reason for the outcry about Bitburg is precisely this ; the attempt to obscure and absolve a nation of its moral responsibility, both to the victims and humanity.

Others, including our friends, may suggest that we forget, or at least minimize, in the name of the current realities. But true reconciliation can only be found if we confront this fact of history - as painful as ugly it was- truthfully and fully.

We believe that memory of the death can serve life, that understanding evil can sustain good and most of all, we believe that we have survived for a purpose - to bear witness and warn so that another Holocaust shall never happen again.

So our message to the world today, and for the future of all

humanity- let us remember together and not allow history repeat itself. We will forever honor and remember each soldier who fell in battle to liberate us and who saved an entire world. Let us make sure that their sacrifice was not in vain.

Shameful

Revisionism

The Nazi ideology did not disappear with the military defeat of Germany. In the mid-Seventies, political groups emerged in the western countries which tried to win supporters for Nazi ideas. They simply denied Nazi crimes, such as the Holocaust, and labeled them as Jewish lies.⁴⁶

The French leader of the Front National, Le Pen after being convicted of anti-Semitism once, did not deny the mass murders but trivialized them, by calling them "merely a detail".⁴⁷

A new element in anti-Jewish propaganda emerged in the Soviet Union claiming that the Zionists collaborated with the Nazis. The Anti-Zionist committee of the Soviet Union was the main source of this accusation at the beginning of the eighties.⁴⁸

In 1948, the French fascist writer Maurice Bardeche published the book Nuremberg ou la Terre Promise ("Nurnberg the Promised Land").⁴⁹ It was in Nurnberg in 1945-46 that the first trial against top ranking Nazis was held and that the scope of the Nazi crimes and destruction were revealed.

Bardeche's book was model for countless others which denied the Nazi crimes. According to Bardeche, the victors falsified history in Nuremberg. The truth, as Bardeche saw it, was that the war crimes and atrocities had been committed by the Allies, while Germany had waged a merely defensive

war. He believed photos of concentration camps, proof of crimes, were 'too good to be true', that deaths were the result of food shortages and epidemics, and gas was solely used as a "disinfectant."⁵⁰ According to Bardeche, the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem meant the establishment of ghettos in the East. It was not right to sympathize with the Jews, either, because, they were the cause of the war.⁵¹

Bardeche's reasoning was adopted by the Frenchman Paul Rassinier, a postwar Socialist member of the parliament who had been deported to the camps of Buchenwald and Dora for taking part in the Resistance during the Nazi occupation of France.⁵²

The writing of Bardeche and Rassinier were frequently cited in neo-Nazi publications, in which the destruction of Jews was denied in order to rehabilitate Nazism. Rassinier was the mentor of the French linguist, Faurisson, whose writing received a great deal of publicity. In a series of publications after 1974, Faurisson dismissed the Holocaust as a fabrication, denied the existence of gas chambers, and attacked the Diary of Anne Frank as a forgery.⁵³ The Netherland State Institute for War Documentation verified the authenticity of the Diary of Anne Frank and published it as "The Diary of Anne Frank- The Critical Edition" in 1986.

In extremist publications in America and England, the denial of the mass murder of Jews had been mixed with anti-Zionism :

Further, we assert that the 'Holocaust' lie was perpetrated by Zionist-Jewry's stunning propaganda machine for the purpose of filling the minds of Gentile people the world over with such guilt feelings... Israel could not have been created in 1948, nor could it have survived since then, without the ability of Zionist agencies to exert financial, political and moral blackmail against the Gentile world as a result of never-ending 'Holocaust' propaganda.⁵⁴

Revisionists'

Unbelievable Claims

Revisionist history of the Third Reich by a reputable historian first appeared in 1961. In The Origins of the Second World War, A.J.P. Taylor argued that Hitler had not planned a general war, and the conflict, far from being premeditated, was "a mistake, the result on both sides of diplomatic blunders."⁵⁵ Still, though Hitler was like other statesmen of his time in conduct of his diplomatic affairs, Taylor explicitly declared that he outdid them all "in wicked deeds."⁵⁶

Historians everywhere attacked Taylor for the book's conceptual perversity and its methodological flaws, but his book became the banner under which a swarm of Nazi apologists, cracks, and anti-Semites rallied. By 1980 the so-called revisionists argued not only that Hitler's Germany was not to blame for World II, but that the murder of six million European Jews by the Nazis never had taken place, that the Holocaust was a hoax invented by the Jews. Most shocking of all, these gross and malicious falsifications, far from being attacked and reputiated, have gained a respectful hearing in academic historical institutions in the United States.⁵⁷

In 1961, a revisionist work appeared in Germany, written by an American, David L. Hoggan. The book had originated as a Harvard doctoral dissertation done in 1948, but was revised, expanded, and Nazified during the ensuing years. Unable to find an American or a bona fide German publisher, Hoggan gave his manuscript to a known Nazi publisher. The title of the book was The Imposed War: The Origins and Originators of World War II (Die erzwungene Krieg; Die Ursachen und Urheber des 2. Weltkriegs.-Verlag der Deutschen Hochschullehrer-Zeitung)⁵⁸

Hoggan's book was an apologia for Nazi Germany in which the English were portrayed as warmongers, the Poles as the real provokers of war, and Hitler the angel of peace.⁵⁹

In 1966 an American isolationist historian, Harry Elmer Barnes, published a pamphlet "Revisionism; A Key to Peace". In it Barnes for all practical purposes denied that Hitler's Germany had committed mass murder. The following sentence is an indication of Barnes's paranoia and ramblings :

Even if one were to accept the most extreme and exaggerated indictment of Hitler and the National Socialists for their activities after 1939 made by anybody fit to remain outside a mental hospital, it is almost alarmingly easy to demonstrate that the atrocities of the Allies in the same period were more numerous as to victims and were carried out for the most part by methods more brutal and painful than alleged extermination in gas ovens.⁶⁰

In 1964 the French fascist Rassinier wrote a new book, Le Drame des Juifs Européens, an incoherent assemblage of arguments rehashed from the storehouse of anti-Semitic writings. Rassinier had one new wrinkle: arithmomania.⁶¹ He came up with the weird calculation that precisely 4,416,108 of the six million Jews said to have been murdered were actually alive and the rest had probably not been killed by the Germans anyway. Around this time Barnes and Rassinier met, the rendezvous having been arranged by Mabel Narjs of Hamburg, cotranslator of Hoggan's Der Erzwungene Krieg (The Imposed War).⁶¹

Rassinier and Barnes established a working relationship ; Barnes undertook to translate Rassinier book into English, and also reviewed Rassinier for the American public - namely the readers of the American Mercury, which at that time was strongly anti-Semitic. Here is Barnes at his

unpitiably worst as Lucy Davidovitz, the great historian, characterized it:⁶²

... the courageous author (Rassinier) lays the chief blame for misrepresentation on those whom we must call the swindlers of the crematoria, the Israeli politicians who derive billions of marks from nonexistent, mythical, and imaginary cadavers, whose numbers have been reckoned in an unusually distorted and dishonest matter.

Rassinier died in 1967 and Barnes a year later, but their fanaticism inspired others in their quest for legitimacy. In 1969, a 119 page book, The Myth of Six Million, by "Anonymous," appeared with an introduction paying tribute to Barnes as "one of America's greatest historians." The introduction was written pseudonymously by Willis A. Carto, head of Liberty Lobby, the best financed anti-Semitic organization in the United States, which operates out Washington, D.C.⁶³ The Myth of the Six Million was published by a Liberty Lobby subsidiary, Noontide Press. (American Mercury is also part of the interlocking network funded by Liberty Lobby.)⁶⁴

The Myth of the Six Million undertook to disprove all the evidence of the murder of European Jews and to discredit all eyewitness testimony, including that of Rudolf Hoess, SS commandant of Auschwitz, and Kurt Gerstein, the SS officer who delivered the poison gas to Belzec and Treblinka.⁶⁵

Following the Myth of Six Million, a pamphlet titled Did the Six Million Really Die? was published in England by a so-called Historical Review Press in Surrey; its author was advertised as one Richard E. Harwood, "a specialist in political and diplomatic aspects of the Second World War" who was "with the University of London." Actually he was Richard Verall, editor of Spearhead magazine, unofficial organ of the National Front, an English racist group.⁶⁶

By now the neo-Nazis had regularly began to exploit terms like "historical review" and "revisionism" in an effort to get attention in respectable circles. In New York a splinter group of the pro-Nazi German-American National Congress hit on the idea of a Revisionist Press to publish pseudoscholarly materials. In 1973 this Revisionist Press reprinted an essay by Barnes, "Revisionism: A Key to Peace," as a small book.⁶⁷

In 1975 The Drama of European Jews, Rassinier's book translated by Barnes, was published in the United States. It was dedicated to "James J. Martin and the late Harry Elmer Barnes; Pioneers in Revisionist History." The publisher was an anti-Semitic outfit in Silver Spring, Maryland; it was distributed by Liberty Bell Publications run by a former Nazi working out of Reedy, West Virginia.⁶⁸

The Cowardness of Butz

The neo-Nazi bid for academic reputability took a great leap forward when word got around that a professor at Northwestern University named Arthur R. Butz had published a book called The Hoax of the Twentieth Century, the hoax being the "Holocaust legend." Butz's book, published in 1976 by the Historical Review Press in Surrey, England- Harwood- Verall's publisher- confidently argued that the Jews of Europe had not been "exterminated and there was no German attempt to exterminate them." Butz- an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer sciences- was convinced that all the Jews said to have been murdered were still alive and he undertook to prove it, his expertise in computers no doubt standing him in good stead.⁶⁹ But Butz did not have the guts to face Miriam Isaacs, the author's wife, who lost her father and mother in Auschwitz, on a local

television program in Chicago.⁷⁰

To demonstrate that Northwestern did not approve of Butz's views, the university administration prompted the history department to organize a series of lectures which would confirm that six million Jews had been indeed been murdered. But, in their public statement the university's president and provost had treated the Butz scandal as a Jewish family sorrow, "a contemptible insult to the dead and the beraved." No one at this great center of learning seemed to regard Butz's absurdities as an offense against historical truth, a matter supposedly of concern to an intellectual and academic community.⁷¹

Also in 1977 David Irving, an English journalist with strong German sympathies and a record of disregard for verification, published Hitler's War. Irving argued in his book that the murder of European Jews was Himmler's doing, and that Hitler was in fact innocent of those terrible deeds.⁷²

Butz Spreads His Venom

In the meantime Butz became a celebrity, even lecturing before an audience brought together by remnant supporters of the late Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (a Nazi collaborator).⁷³ Butz's book has been distributed in the United States by Carto's Noontide Press and by practically every other enterprising anti-Semitic group. One of Butz's "academic" sponsors has been Dr. Austin J. App, who used to teach English at the La Salle College in Philadelphia and claimed to be associated with Barnes. App's Nazi sympathies and anti-Semitic activities date back to the early 1940s; a prolific pamphleteer, he himself was the author of a thirty-nine page effusion, The

Six Million Swindle, ⁷⁴ which he has peddled along with the collected works of Butz, Harwood, and Hoggan. Butz's book was also distributed in Australia. ⁷⁵

In Germany, Udo Walendy, a Nazi in good standing from the old days, translated Butz (Der Jahrhundert Betrug), and published his version through a "revisionist" press which he operated. ⁷⁶ Walendy claims that the photographs of barely living camp inmates or of dead and rotted cadavers are "fake atrocity photographs" ⁷⁷

The Travesty of the

" Institute of Historical Review "

In 1979 Willis Carto created The Institute of Historical Review, using the resources of Liberty Lobby and its network. This institute convoked a "Revisionist Convention" on the Northrup College campus in Los Angeles. ⁷⁸ Papers were read by Butz, Faurisson, App, and Walendy, arguing that there had been no Holocaust and no gas chambers; that all camp photographs had been faked; that the Jews(alas) were still alive. Carto announced that in 1980 the Institute of Historical Review would launch a quarterly, a Journal of Historical Review. In the first issue the lead articles were by Butz and other pieces by Faurisson, App, Walendy, and others. ⁷⁹ A second issue followed with similar contents, and a second convention was held in August at Ponomia College, Claremont, California, this one dedicated to Rassiner's memory. ⁸⁰

Revisionist" Awards"

for Proving the Holocaust

The following letter appeared in the August 24-30, 1980 issue of the Jerusalem Post - International Edition (the writer, Melvin Mermelstein, is a close friend of the author) : 81

To The Editor of the Jerusalem Post

Sir, - By now you may have heard of the so-called "prestigious names" : 1. **Dr. Austin J. App** (retired), La Salle College, Philadelphia 2. **John Bennett**, Victoria Council for Civil Liberties, Australia 3. **Dr. Reinhard K. Buchner**, California State University, Long Beach 4. **Dr. Arthur R. Butz**, Northwestern University, Illinois 5. **James E. Egolf**, Duquesne University, Pennsylvania 6. **Dr. Robert Faurisson**, University of Lyon, France 7. **Diitlieb Felderer**, Bible Researcher, Sweden 8. **Dr. James J. Martin**, Institute of Historical Review 9. Udo **Walendy**, Verlag Fur Volkstum & Zeitgeschichtesforschung

You may have also read about a recent publication of the so-called "Journal of Historical Review" which originated in Torrence, California. If by chance you have not heard of these gentlemen, nor read "about the so-called "Journal of Historical Review," allow me to inform you that these university professors, some of them former Nazis of the old Hitlerite regime, have taken upon themselves to use and abuse our colleges and universities throughout the western world, in particular in the United States, to spread lies, hatred and bigotry vis-a-vis the subject known as the "Holocaust." They even invented new titles to distort these awesome historical events, "The Hoax of the 20th Century," "The Myth of the Six Million," etc.

What can one say, when once again we sit idly by as these highly acclaimed professors, in highly accredited universities are "at it again." They are teaching our new generation that the chimneys of Auschwitz were only those of the bakeries. That there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau. That Dachau was a peaceful town within Nazi Germany and that the "six million

European Jews fled Nazism and have been living peacefully in Israel ever since."

As one who survived the infernos of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald, my eyes are still blurring from the vision of that nightmare and my ears are still ringing with the agonizing sounds of men, women and little children who were lured and driven into gas chambers disguised as shower rooms, solely and exclusively because they were Jewish. These "prestigious gentlemen" mentioned above, as well as the bigoted organizations they represent, have the gall to offer any survivor of the Holocaust \$ 50,000 and possibly \$ 100,000 award if he or she can prove that indeed gassings of men, women and little children had actually taken place during the awesome period known as the " Holocaust."

I shall be leaving for the 10th time to a survivors' conference in October to be held at Auschwitz. Perhaps some of those "prestigious" gentlemen would like to accompany me, at which time, I could physically point out the places from where I saw the actual gassings, of men, women and little children in gas chambers disguised as shower rooms.

Melvin Mermelstein
Huntington Beach, California

On November 20, 1980 the Institute for Historical Review, (P.O.B. Box 1306, Torrence, Ca. 90505, USA) on its stationary sent the following letter:⁸²

Dear Mr. Mermelstein,

Your recent letter in the Jerusalem Post indicates that you can prove that Jews were gassed in gas-chambers at Auschwitz. At our 1979 Revisionist Convention we announced a \$ 50,000 reward for proof of this allegation. To date, no one has stepped forward, and at the 1980 Revisionist Convention we suspended the reward and replaced it with a \$ 25,000 reward for the proof

that The Diary of Anne Frank is authentic, and another \$ 25,000 reward for the proof that the Jews were turned into bars of soap by the Nazis.

In the circumstances, we will re-open the \$ 50,000 reward so that you can apply. I enclose the necessary application forms. Please note that the evidence will be judged along the same standards of evidence as evidence in a U.S. criminal court; not by the standards of the Nuremberg Trials.

If we do not hear from you, we will obliged to draw our own conclusions, and publicize the fact to the mass media, including The Jerusalem Post.

I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Sincerely,

Lewis Brandon
Director

On March 11, 1981 The New York Times reported that Mel Mermelstein, an Auschwitz survivor, has filed a suit against the Institute for Historical Review.⁸³ The Los Angeles Times on March 12, 1981 had the following report:⁸⁴

Some nightmares never end... Nearly four decades ago, Long Beach businessman, Mel Mermelstein was prisoner A-4865 of Auschwitz. His parents, two sisters and brothers died there. He survived... Today, he is awaiting trial of a \$ 6-million damage suit he filed in Los Angeles Supreme Court against a Torrance organization [Institute of Historical Review] that says it never happened... Mermelstein said the attempt by the institute and by similar groups to rewrite history appears to be part of a resurgent anti-Semitism, visible also in recent attacks on Jewish institutions and against Israel. "But this is one Jew who won't take it" he said. " This is one Jew who is through with nightmares and being insulted, libeled and pushed around... This time, I fight back."

On October 10, 1981 The Los Angeles Times reported:⁸⁵ "Holocaust Given Legal Recognition"- A Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge officially recognized [Friday] that "Jews were gassed to death at Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland during the summer of 1944." The headline in The Press-Telegram of Long Beach, California read:⁸⁶ "Judge upholds Holocaust as 'established fact'-Holocaust no myth, judge rules in emotional case."

When Mermelstein was asked why did he fight back against the denial of the Holocaust he stated with strong conviction that "the study of the Holocaust is the study of mankind."⁸⁷ Elie Wiesel said: "I speak of Jews who died at Auschwitz of humanity that died at Auschwitz for when humanity kills Jews it kills itself."⁸⁸

The Trauma Caused by Universalists

The trauma of the after Holocaust period was caused not only by the revisionist historians but also by those who gave the Holocaust an universalist interpretation.

The murder of the 6 million Jews, in its unparalleled scope, devastating effect, and incomprehensible intent, overtook the capacity of man's imagination to conceive of evil. The killing camps, an empire of death with their gas chambers and crematoria operated by the SS Death's Head Division, eclipsed man's vision of hell. The names of the death factories - and especially the name of Auschwitz- replaced Dante's Nine Circles of Hell as the quintessential epitome of evil, for they were located not in the literary reaches of medieval religious imagination, but in the political reality of twentieth century-Europe.⁸⁹

It was anticipated that Auschwitz would become a metaphor and a paradigm for evil. But it was unexpected that Auschwitz would be turned into a metaphor for the "ecumanical nature" of the evil that was committed there or to render the murder of the Jews as mere atrocity, sheer blood lust. It was also unexpected after the Holocaust that there will be a failure to understand -or to acknowledge- that the evil was not ecumanical, that the killing was not blood lust for its own sake, but that the evil and killing were specifically directed against particular victims. To make Auschwitz serve as the paradigm for universal evil is in effect to deny the historical reality that the German Nazi dictatorship had a specific intent in murdering the Jews.⁹⁰

What underlies the attempt to deprive the Jews of their terrible unique experience as a people marked for annihilation? Does it derive from a form of contempt for the Jews, for some personal resentment against Jews, or out of some barely conscious stirring of anti-Jewish hostility? By subsuming the Jewish losses under a universal or ecumanical classification of human suffering, or the Holocaust as man's inhumanity against man, one can blur the distinctness of Jewish fate and consequently one can disclaim the presence of anti-Semitism, whether it smolders in the dark recesses of one's own mind or whether it operates in the pitiless light of history.⁹¹ Therefore, one can feel to reject political or moral responsibility for the consequences of that anti-Semitism.

In denying the uniqueness of the fate the Jews experienced as the chosen victims of mass murder, the universalizers of Auschwitz do not necessarily deny the uniqueness of the mass murderers. At least they understand that the mass murder which the Nazi state perpetrated stands alone in the annals of human murderousness, that something new in human history happened when Hitler's Germany arrogated to itself the right to decide who was entitled to live in the world and who was not. But all too

often the necessary and essential distinction between the murder of 6 million Jews and the accelerating violence and terror of our time is blurred, sometimes erased, whether mindlessly or with political intent.⁹²

German

Revisionism

Revisionism and universalism were given German interpretations too.

World War II. was the most destructive war the world has ever known. Some 50 million people had died as a direct consequence of the war. Untold suffering and cruelty had been deliberately visited upon many millions more who survived. The destruction of European Jewry and the Holocaust were almost completed. Vast areas of Europe and the Far East had been devastated. Innumerable cities had been reduced to rubbles. Over 6,000 Jewish communities were destroyed. Countries had shifted their boundaries, nationalities and ethnic minorities had changed their domicile, dispersed, or lost their independence. The sheer scale of devastation wrought by the conflict was almost beyond comprehension.⁹³

Germany was divided into West and East Germany. After the war, extensive trials of war criminals, denazification, and reeducation had aimed to eliminate the evil of Nazism and its adherents from public life in the western zones as in the East. As the emerging Cold War began to make it more important to prop up West Germany and turn it into a bulwark against the perceived threat of Soviet Communism, priorities started to change. Money was poured into West Germany under the Marshall Plan.⁹⁴ Former Nazi war criminals were now given remittance of their sentences or let off prosecution altogether. Attempts to pursue Nazi war criminals not yet brought to justice were abandoned or shelved.⁹⁵ The Western Allies gave

strong support to the policies of the elected West German government from the 1950s all the way up to 1969.

During those years, West Germany not only recovered from wartime damage and the postwar crisis, but became one of the world's richest and most prosperous nations. The "economic miracle" gave the West German economy an enviable stability and strength. Yet this was achieved not least on the basis of trying to forget the past. Very little was said about Nazism. Next to nothing was taught about it in schools. The Nazi affiliations of major figures in the economy were never mentioned. Even in politics, there was no great stigma attached to a Nazi background, so long as this did not become the embarrassing object of public debate. The Christian Democratic hegemony of the Adenauer years sought to unite the West Germans on the basis of traditional, Christian, conservative values which it believed the Nazis had overturned.⁹⁶ Nazism was regarded as an accident, a combination of the weaknesses of modern democracy and their exploitation by the unique, demonic genius of Hitler. Hitler was portrayed as a determined fanatic, whose ideas were more Austrian or European than German, and who planned from the start to launch a world war and exterminate the Jews. The enormities of Nazism's crimes were admitted, and denounced, but they were attributed mainly to Hitler himself, who in turn was presented as the essence of a thoroughly modern dictator. Extensive reparations were made to Israel as part of *Wiedergutmachung* ("putting things right"), but this served more as substitute for German self-examination than as a spur to it.⁹⁷

If Hitler's regime was comparable in this to anything at all, it was to that other "totalitarian state", Stalinist Russia.⁹⁸ One of the central problems of maintaining the theory that Nazism and Stalinism were two sides of the same "totalitarian" coin lay in the fact that no serious commentator at this time was prepared to argue that Hitler's genocidal anti-Semitism had any real



counterpart anywhere else in the world. West Germans were prepared to denounce the attempted extermination of the Jews, and all the horrors that went with the name "Auschwitz." But this served to some extent as a means of putting off contemplating Nazism's lesser crimes, which had either been committed, often with conservative complicity, throughout the Third Reich's existence, or been carried out outside the extermination camps, in the rest of occupied Europe, during the war. There was little mention of the "euthanasia programs", for example, while the German army was portrayed in the writings of the time mostly as an honorable military force composed of decent soldiers who had little to do with Nazism.⁹⁹ In this way, conservatives in the postwar years sought to rescue a degree of national self-respect. Meanwhile East Germany's Communist regime and its historians faced up the Nazi past by identifying with the Communist resistance to Nazism, whose dimensions and importance they greatly overestimated. War memorials and museums in the East and literature published there tended to suggest that Nazism's crimes had been committed by those who lived in the west, or had fled there before the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

By the second half of the 1960s, there were signs that this postwar era was coming to a close. A new generation of West Germans was growing up. Confronted with a wall silence of their elders, they wanted to find out for themselves the truth about the Nazi past. Neither they nor the young university historians and teachers who sympathized with them were willing to be fobbed off with references to the demonic genius of Hitler, or by morally vehement but intellectually vacuous denunciation of Auschwitz.¹⁰⁰

The Eichmann Trial
and the Auschwitz Trial

The signal for a more determined confrontation with the German past emerged at the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 and at the Auschwitz Trials in Germany in 1964. New sources were becoming available including the captured Nazi documents, now returned to Germany, thus making genuine and serious research, much easier than immediately after the war.¹⁰¹ By the 1970s, numerous major scholarly studies were appearing which left no doubt about the scale and scope of Nazi crimes; studies of Nazi foreign policy, and of the extermination camps, the seizure of power, the suppression of opposition, and the complicity of the conservative elites in the early years of the Third Reich.¹⁰² Younger historians vigorously attacked the previous concentration on Hitler as a unique, demonic individual who had planned everything from the start. Instead, the historians generally associated with this "Social-liberal" West German regime in the 1970s traced back the origins of Nazism deep into the German past, to the militarism of Prussia, the authoritarianism of Bismarck, the adventurism of Wilhelm II; to the anti-Semitic political parties of pre-1914; to the absence of democracy in Germany before 1918.¹⁰³

" New
Germany? "

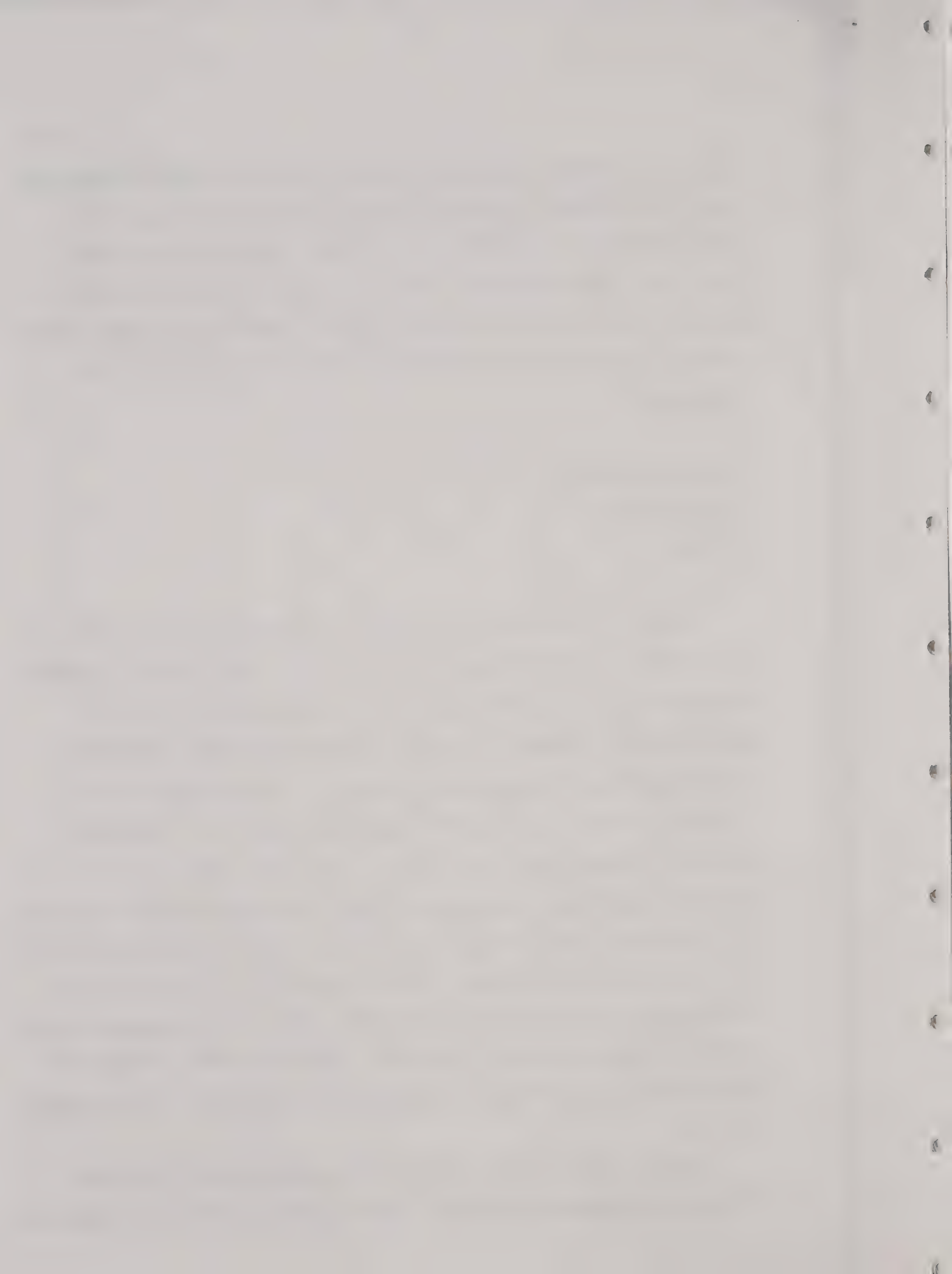
In dealing with the Nazi past, German politicians also began to overcome old hesitations and taboos. Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt signed a series of agreements with the Soviet-bloc countries which helped to reduce tension in Central Europe and eased the pressure on West Berlin. In a famous gesture, Brandt fell to his knees at the memorial to the Jewish victims of the Warsaw ghetto in Poland, an act which was widely understood to symbolize Germany's obeisance before its historical

victims.¹⁰⁴ In West Germany newspapers, magazines, radio and television, all competed to bring the crimes of Nazism before their audience. In universities and schools the treatment of The Third Reich became more honest. But at the same time, many war criminals still went untouched. Many ex-Nazis remained in positions of power and authority. Many writers and historians resisted the new mood of ruthless confrontation with the German past.

The 50th Anniversary of Hitler's Rise to Power

In 1983, Germans marked the fiftieth anniversary of Nazi seizure of power with an overwhelming flood of books, newspaper articles, magazine series, television programs, exhibitions, and conferences.¹⁰⁵ In 1978 Hellmut Diwald, professor of Medieval history at Erlangen University published his book, History of the Germans.¹⁰⁶ Diwald argued that the Germans' past had been "morally disqualified" since 1945, "devalued, destroyed and taken away from them."¹⁰⁷ He sought to restore it in a massive, popular history that began with the present and worked its way back through the past, ending with the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, the original "thousand year Reich," in 919. Diwald wrote a great deal about the brutal expulsion of the German population from Eastern Europe at the end of World War II, he wasted little more than two pages on the crimes and atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, above all against the Jews.

Diwald was the frontrunner of German revisionism. In 1982 the Social-liberal era came to an end. The Free Democratic Party switched back



to form a coalition with the conservative Christian Democrats and Helmut Kohl became chancellor. The intellectual mood of West Germany changed too. Spurred on by the new note of patriotism struck by the Reagan presidency in the United States, Chancellor's Kohl government began to strike a patriotic chord itself.¹⁰⁸

New Directions of Revisionism in Germany

A new mood started in Germany by the political right whose representatives declared that time has come for the West Germans to stop feeling guilty about the past and start feeling proud of themselves once more. Bavarian- Minister President Franz Joseph Strauss, declared that " the Germans should get off of their knees and start to 'walk tall' again... That means saying yes to the idea that we have been Germans, and not letting the vision of the great German past be blocked by the sight-screens of those accursed twelve years between 1933-1945."¹⁰⁹ Other politicians and leaders made similar statements.

As this political campaign gathered momentum, privately founded right-wing, "research" institutions outside the main stream of German academic life, such as Alfred Schickel's " Contemporary History Research Center" in Ingolstadt, began to gain more respectable audience through the columns of the influential Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.¹¹⁰ Soon serious university historians with international reputation began to add their voices as well. The philosophical historian Ernst Nolte, best known internationally for his book Three Faces of Fascism, on June 6, 1986, published an article in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, under the title " The

Past Will Not Pass Away."¹¹¹ With the passage of time, he said, most of the events tended to lose their urgency and became object of quiet and scholarly study by historians. Not so the events of the Third Reich, which continued to hang over the German present like an executioners's sword. The Third Reich was, he said, constantly held up as a negative example of militarism, even though in the Federal Republic every one now claimed to be a *pacifist*; of austerity, even though the Federal Republic was now highly prosperous society; of great power imperialism, even though the role of the Federal Republic in world politics now was only that of a medium sized state; of state inspired mass murder, even though West Germany now enshrined human rights in its legislation. Yet the memory of Nazism, Nolte complained, awakened constant fear that the old Adam would break through the West German society in all these respects.¹¹²

Michael Sturmer, professor of history at Erlangen University and "historical advisor" to Chancellor Kohl, also began to write a series of articles calling for a new sense of national identity.¹¹³ Only by restoring their history to themselves could German recover the pride again, and thus become reliable allies in the fight against Communism.¹¹⁴

Through Nolte, Sturmer and others a determined "revisionist" movement was under way to persuade the world that it is time to stop blaming the Germans for the crimes of Nazism; that Nazi Germany basically was forced into a war of defense against communists, including 6,000,000 Jews- one and half million innocent children-, and it is time to create a proud German historical record, including the Nazi period, as Nazism saved the western world. The echoes of Hitler are quite clear and loud.

Neo-Nazi

Skinheads

Revisionists can pride themselves in their accomplishments. In 1992 according to the German government's estimates there were 40,000 neo-Nazi skinheads in Germany who idolize Hitler and want only "racially pure" Germans to live in and rule Germany. 4000 German skinheads are classified as violent. Most are under 20; "babyskins" are as young as 12. They can be male or female. In 1992, many skinhead demonstrations in Germany ended up in murders, lootings, destructions of homes, desecrations of cemeteries and synagogues. There are racist groups in the United States, too. An infamous one is the Aryan Nation. These groups are similar to the German ones on that they hate non-whites and want to follow Hitler's dream of a world ruled by a "master race of white people." They first surfaced in the United States in 1987.¹¹⁵

Troubling Conclusions

How Painful Revisionism
is for Survivors!

The revisionist historians deny the Holocaust. Others de-Judaized the Holocaust or relegated the Jewish tragedy to footnotes. Under a guise of scholarship, propagandists the world over reflect on the international scope of the phenomenon. They are motivated by a desire to rehabilitate the Third Reich and its leaders, to develop new techniques for anti-Semitic themes. Neo-Nazi literature advances theories hinting that the "Final Solution of the Jewish Problem" was justified.

Communist historians, while not denying the genocidal policies of the Germans, try for their own political goals, to de-Judaize the specific treatment of the Jews. Simply, they are treated as citizens of their countries, and counted with the total number of victims. Even the word "Holocaust"

has no equivalent in their language.

Looking through Western world literature one finds the story of the Holocaust relegated to the footnotes. Many schoolbooks have no more than a page, or paragraph on this topic.

How painful this rewriting, revisionism is for survivors !

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CHAPTER 12

To Remember and to Learn

The Legacy¹

Shema

You who live secure
In your warm houses,
Who, returning at evening, find
Hot food and friendly faces;
 Consider whether this is a man
 Who labours in mud
 Who know no peace.
 Who fights for a crust of bread
 Who dies at a yes or no.
 Consider whether this is a woman,
 Without hair or name
 With no more strength to remember
 Eyes empty and womb cold
 As a frog in winter.
Consider that this has been:
I commend these words to you.
Engrave them in your hearts
When you are in your house, when you walk on your way
When you go to bed, when you rise:
Repeat them to your children.
 Or may your house crumble,
 Disease render your powerless,
 Your offspring avert their faces from you. ²

Primo Levi
January 10, 1946

Generations after the Holocaust only by learning about the past can one have some appreciation what was lost, destroyed. Through the knowledge of the Holocaust can mankind have a better understanding of itself. Children of survivors must remember so they can teach.

In 1980, at the first international gathering of Holocaust survivors,

that took place in Jerusalem, children of Holocaust survivors proclaimed, "We accept the legacy of the Holocaust."³ That legacy must not simply be confined to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive and undistorted. It also must include an enrichment of the Jewish people, whose resources were so depleted in the Holocaust and after, but also a dedication to enrich mankind with a renewed spiritual and humanistic commitment.

In December 1941, during the evacuation of the ghetto of Riga, the Nazis shot and killed the famous Jewish historian, Simon Dubnov. He was eighty-one. The story is told that Dubnov's last word and admonition to his fellow Jews were: "Write and record!" (in Yiddish *shreibt un farshreibt*).⁴ Dubnov's anguished appeal, and that of countless Jews who expressed a similar saying that their sufferings be made known, have echoed throughout the years. Many have taken up this task as a sacred duty, reflecting the deeply felt obligations of so many who lived and died in this period - to tell the story either as witness, or in commemoration, or as a somber warning to future generations.

But along with this task, there is another impulse that is inevitably grown stronger in recent years to integrate the history of the Holocaust into the general stream of historical consciousness and to apply to it modes of discourse, the scholarly techniques, and the kind of analyses used for all other historical issues. In part this impulse derives from a concern that the history of the Holocaust receive universal recognition, that it be acknowledged as an important part of the modern historical experience and not just an episode in the history of the Jewish people. Another reason is the sense that historical methods can help answer questions that have troubled observers for many years: How did the Nazi policy evolve the mass murder? How should one evaluate the roles of the collaborating governments and societies, the allies of the Reich, bystanders, and the Jews themselves?

For years the Holocaust was considered too difficult a subject to discuss in schools, too painful an event to relieve through dramatic presentation, But it has also been recognized that the world could all too easily forget the sufferings of the Holocaust victims, This would be a great injustice to their memory - a foolish invitation for history to repeat itself.⁵

The story of the Holocaust must be told for society to be on its own guard and to recognize the signals of when it might happen again. It is only through an exploration of both the positive and negative charges in world history that mankind can expect to learn from the past. The lessons learned from the Holocaust will depend much on the individual, on his background, and the desire to change the world into a better place. Courage and morality of a society are constantly on trial, and in crises society is often tested to its limits. An illuminating illustration comes from a teacher who tells of the reaction of a student, who when asked if the events surrounding the Watergate burglary could ever lead to something of Holocaust proportion, answered: "Could be. Maybe it wouldn't be the Jews again; maybe it would" but if what went on Auschwitz could happen in a civilized country in 1944, why couldn't it happen in any civilized country at any time- even 1978- if people are really blinded by their own problems and hate? "⁶

How is the

Holocaust Taught?

A scandal erupted in 1988 when the United States Department of Education rejected an application for a \$ 70,000 grant to disseminate Facing History and Ourselves, a privately produced curriculum to teach junior -high school students about the Holocaust. ⁷ It seems that an outside reviewer for the department had criticized the curriculum for failing to present the

viewpoints of the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. Though the department denied that its decision had been determined by an outside reviewer- or, as the curriculum supporters charged, by the negative opinion of conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly- Congressman Ted Weiss (New York) invoked his status as the son of Jewish refugees from Nazism to air the matter before his congressional committee. After hearing testimony from the author of *Facing History*, the subcommittee concluded that the " peer-review process had been subverted by opponents of Holocaust education. "8

The decentralized nature of the American educational system makes it very difficult to find out in exactly how many districts the Holocaust is taught, what precisely is taught, for how long a period, or with what effect. What is known is that , in spite of legislation to teach the Holocaust by many states and with a few exceptions such as the author's experiences in Glennbrook South High School in Glenview, Illinois and other schools and similar experiences of survivors all over the United States, the Holocaust as a subject has yet to earn a full place in secondary-school education.

There has also been outright opposition to teaching about the Holocaust. In 1977, when the New York City Board of Education introduced its own curriculum for a mandatory unit called The Holocaust: A Study of Genocide, M. T. Mehdi, head of the Arab American Relations Committee, decried it as " an attempt by the Zionist to use the city educational system for their evil propaganda purposes. "9 The president of the German-American Committee for Greater New York said, " It creates a bad atmosphere toward German-Americans in this country" and added that " there is no real proof that the Holocaust actually did happen. "10 The New York Association of Black Educators objected on the grounds that the topic was irrelevant to black students. 11 In Philadelphia, where preparations were under way to introduce a similar course, a Lutheran minister worried that the schools

were not teaching other instances of genocide ; beside the Holocaust curriculum made it appear " that genocide was a Teutonic phenomenon." ¹² Parents of student in a suburban Chicago junior high school in Winnetka, Illinois, protested against such instruction on the ground that the Holocaust was a " myth." ¹³

The " Winnetka Affair " deserves attention with focusing on central issues concerning the teaching and the lessons of the Holocaust.

An Illinois law that took effect January 1, 1991 requires all public high schools in the state to teach "about the Nazi atrocities of 1933-45 and the Holocaust during which six million Jews and millions of non-Jews were exterminated." Winnetka's, a wealthy suburb, public schools taught the Holocaust for 10 years before the Illinois law of 1991. There were no problems for ten years. But when it came for a student, Sanya Sarich, to learn about the Holocaust in her studies class and to read Elie Wiesel's book , Night, her parents took her out of school saying they didn't want to expose her to that. ¹⁴

Safet Sarich called Wiesel's book, which documents his experiences in Auschwitz, the product of a " demented mind", interested only in perpetuating " gross distortions and myths " about the Holocaust. Sarich sent out more than 6,000 letters to parents, teachers, clergy, politicians, Winnetka residents, the media and others saying that most historical sources on the Holocaust are based on " black propaganda, rumors and exaggerations." His letter said it is only myth, not fact, that six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, that the gas chambers were used at Auschwitz to kill Jews and that Hitler and the Nazis had a systematic plan for the extermination of the Jews. ¹⁵

The " Winnetka Affair" demonstrated the need of teaching the Holocaust in schools. The fact that there are people who publicly dispute the facts of the Holocaust shows how important it is to make those facts widely

known and to teach the Holocaust lessons regarding the evils of anti-Semitism and prejudice in general. In a preface to Elie Wiesel's Night, Robert McAfee Brown, a prominent theologian, talks about why the Holocaust must be taught and remembered. "There are those today who are trying to persuade the world that the story isn't true, urging to treat it as the product of diseased minds, indeed. They are committing the greatest indignity human being can inflict on others, telling people who have suffered excruciating pain and loss that their pain and loss were illusions. Perhaps there is a greater indignity ; it is committed by those who believe them." ¹⁶

The Holocaust must be taught because those who deny it are not simply curious doubters. Those who deny the Holocaust have taken a step backward into the darkness that indeed made it possible the Holocaust to happen in the first place. It takes a special kind of human being to be able to fragment, to cut away from his own consciousness and entire historical experience. That how the camp guards were able to do their work, too. How else could they close the door on the gas chambers and go home to the warmth of their own wives and children at the end of the day ?

The Holocaust has to be taught so that poison of the deniers does not spread, so that they don't pull down with them others who have yet to know the whole truth. ¹⁷ Students must know the truth about the Holocaust and as a result of it, hopefully, will not let it happen again.

Teenagers in the United States see acts of violence all the time, everyday on TV and in the movies. So many that they are numb to it, have no sense what is real and what is not, what is horrifying and what is make-believe. It is no coincidence that the hottest things around not so long ago were something called Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. ¹⁸ Focusing on those words for a minute brings the realization how important it is that the Holocaust be taught over and over again, not to be relegated to the dust bins

of history, its facts learned, its reality secured, that revisionism be defeated. In every generation.¹⁹

In the book, One by One, by One, the author, Judith Miller tells why the teaching of the Holocaust is needed and what can be learned from it:

Knowing and remembering the evil in history and in each of us might not prevent a recurrence of genocide. But ignorance of history or suppression of memory removes the surest defense we have, however inadequate, against such gigantic cruelty and indifference to it. There is always the danger of overreaction—the fear that every form of cruelty will inexorably lead to a new Holocaust. But that Europeans and Americans failed to react quickly to Pol Pot's genocide in Cambodia is alarming evidence that the memory of the Holocaust has not sufficiently sensitized Western democracies to the consequences of violation human rights elsewhere in the world. On a much smaller scale, the delayed and initially response by Western intellectuals to Iran's death warrant against writer Salman Rushdie suggests that even those who should be more aware of the dangers of intolerance are not yet equipped to act as moral and intellectual guardians of the precious freedoms and liberties we enjoy.

Abstraction is memory's most ardent enemy. It kills because it encourages distance and often indifference. We must remind ourselves that the Holocaust was not six million. It was one, plus one, plus one... Only in understanding that civilized people must defend the one, by one, by one.. Can the Holocaust, the incomprehensible, be given meaning.²⁰

Despite indifference and opposition, the history of the Holocaust, the destruction and murder of European Jews, is gradually being given some place in secondary-school curriculum. It is now incorporated in most of cases in the "Global Studies" or "World Cultures" courses of at least seven state education departments (California, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania) and in the curricula of many large-city boards of education (Atlanta, Baltimore, Des Moines, Los Angeles,

Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and of many dozens, even hundreds of local boards, mostly in the suburban communities of large cities.²¹ Studied in the context of totalitarianism in Europe (Nazism, fascism and communism) and of World War II, and sometimes also as part of the American history curriculum for the period, the subject is commonly offered in grade 10 (age fifteen), occasionally in grade 11.²²

The teaching units range from two to ten periods, or longer if student interest warrants. In New York State, where instruction is mandatory, the Regents high-school examination in Global Studies (formerly Social Studies) and in American History, which students are required to pass for graduation, regularly include one question on the subject.²³ Most school boards or departments of education produce their own curricula, which develop material briefly sketched in world-history textbooks. School districts sometimes provide programs to familiarize their teachers with the new course material. Schools and teachers can also avail themselves of outside resources. Social Study School Service, a commercial company, distributed a World History Catalogue with five pages of listing books and videocassettes on Hitler, Nazism the Holocaust, and genocide. The company also issues a thirty-two-page catalogue, Teaching of the Holocaust; Resources and Materials, a macabre cornucopia of books at all grade levels, curricula, teaching guides, atlases, charts, videocassettes, sound filmstrips, photo aids, posters, simulation, games, crossword puzzles, cartoon assignment, and quizzes.²⁴

Teachers can also make use of Jewish institutional resources. According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington, D.C., there are no fewer than nineteen Holocaust museums in the United States, forty eight resource centers, thirty four archival facilities, twelve

memorials, and twenty-six research institutes, and hundreds of survivors' organizations which provide speakers. The Holocaust; An Annotated Bibliography and Resource Guide by David M. Szonyi was published in 1985 by National Jewish Resource Center in New York.²⁵

What is the primary lesson of the Holocaust ?

In view of Lucy Dawidowicz, the famous historian, the answer is simple.²⁶ Mankind has to turn to the fundamental code of civilization and of the three great religions whose basic text is the Jewish Bible. Mankind has to turn to the Sixth Commandment, which prescribes; " Thou shall not murder."²⁷

The Lessons of Nazism

National Socialist Germany's ghostly presence hovers over mankind, to inhabit the political and moral universe. For Nazism has come to represent the essence of evil, the demon let loose in society, Cain in corporate embodiment.²⁸ The accomplishment of the National Socialist state was nothing less than the consummation of mass murder in the service of fanatic racism whose unconditional imperative was; destroy the Jews. Obsessed by its passion to kill the Jews, the Nazi state harnessed the energies of its people and of its institutions of government ; of industry, technology, and science ; of education, art, and religion. It succeeded in consolidating and systematizing them for that mission of monumental mass murder. Never before had mass murder been so regulated and regularized, organized on scientific principles of industrial management, its standardized procedures for killing developed by a system of empirical testing and designed to achieve a maximum efficiency of operation. Never before in human history had a

state and a political movement dedicated itself to the destruction of a whole people.²⁹

The destruction of European Jews was and remains a special Jewish sorrow. But the National Socialist state and its capacity to organize mass murder on grounds of racist anti-Semitism was and remains a universal concern because it represents a terrifying juncture in human history. Things once unthinkable are now not only possible, but have actually happened. In 1897, when the Dreyfus Affair was tearing France apart, Bernard Lazare, a French Jew active in Dreyfus's defense, addressed a group of Jewish students in Paris on the subject of anti-Semitism. "For the Christian peoples," he remarked, "an Armenian solution to their Jew-hatred is available."³⁰ He was referring to the Turkish massacres of Armenians, which in their extent and horror most closely approximated the murder of European Jews. But Lazare went on, "their sensibilities cannot allow them to envisage that."³¹ The once unthinkable "Armenian solution" became, in the twentieth century, the achievable "Final Solution", the Nazi code name for the annihilation of European Jews, the Holocaust.

What men do today, the famous theologian, Karl Jaspers said, becomes the source of their future actions. Nothing but the most lucid consciousness of horror that happened can help avoid it for the future: "That which has happened is a warning. To forget it is guilt. It must be continually remembered. It was possible for this to happen, and it remains possible for it to happen again at any minute. Only in knowledge can it be prevented."³²

Questions after
the Holocaust

" Where Is God Now ?³³

(Elie Wiesel, Night)

Where are we going?

*To the end of the world, little girl. We are going to
end of the world.*

Is that far ?

No, not really.

You see, I am really tired. It is wrong, tell, is it
wrong to be so tired ?

Everybody is tired, my little girl.

Even God ?

I don't know. You will ask Him yourself.

Elie Wiesel, A Mother and Her Daughter," A Jew Today

Some questions are as old as creation : Why is there something rather than nothing ? Other questions are as ancient as human civilization; Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper ?

Some questions are new and unprecedented : Will human beings and the world as we know it be destroyed by using atomic weapons ? Will man destroy mankind and all life on earth ?

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, old questions are asked anew and new questions are asked with greater urgency and intensity. The question from Elie Wiesel's Night- " Where Is God Now ?"- provides a case in point. In it one can hear the echo of the biblical Job, but the echo resounds with a contemporary voice of its own.

Judaism and Christianity maintain that God is benevolent, omnipotent, and immanent (though transcendent, God is also involved in history.) Biblical religions deny that history is absurd or meaningless. Judaism and Christianity regard history as the domain in which the divine expresses its plan for humanity and for all creation.

The Holocaust forces Judaism and Christianity to reexamine its most

fundamental beliefs. It is argued that " from the perspective of the victims, who far outnumber the survivors, the disorder of meaningless death contradicts the ordering impulses of time. Those who died for nothing in the Holocaust left the living with a paralyzing dilemma of facing a perpetually present grief." ³⁴

As an event, the Holocaust cannot be reduced to an order, to a system for survival, or even to a sense of overriding meaning. For many, the Holocaust defies meaning and negates hope. The scope of victimization reduces even a survival to a nullity.³⁵

At the end of the book of Lamentations, a scroll is read in the synagogues on the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av (the anniversary of the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem - in 586 B.C. E. and 70 C.E. respectively- and of the exile of the Jewish people), in which two verses are chanted ; " Return us unto Thee, oh Lord, as we shall return ; renew our days as of old. Unless You have abandoned us entirely, have been angry with us to the extreme." ³⁶ Tradition mandates that the book not end in utter abandonment but that the verse of return be repeated so that the lament can end with the possibility of hope.

Cloud of Smoke

Pillar of Fire

Both Judaism and Christianity are religions of redemption. Both religions come to this affirmation about human fate out of central events in history. For Jews, the basic orientating experience has been the Exodus. The meaning of Exodus is that man is of infinite value and will be redeemed.

Every act of life is to be lived by that realization.³⁷

For Christians, the great paradigm of this meaning is the life, death,

and resurrection of Jesus Christ. By its implications, all of life is lived through Jesus.³⁸

The central events of both religions occur and affect humans in history. The shocking contrast of the event of salvation and the cruel realities of actual historical existence have tempted Christians to cut loose from earthly time. Yet both religions ultimately have stood by the claim that redemption will be realized in actual human history.³⁹ This view has had enormous impact on the general Western and modern view that human liberation can and will be realized in the here and now.

The Challenge of the Holocaust

Both religions have always sought to isolate their central events- Exodus and Easter- from further revelations or from challenge of the demonic counter-experience of evil in history. By and large, both religions have continued since 1945 as if nothing had happened to change their central understanding. It is increasingly obvious that this is impossible, that the Holocaust cannot be ignored.

By its very nature, the Holocaust is obviously central for Jews. The destruction cut so deeply that it is a question whether the community can recover from it. When Adolf Eichmann went into hiding in 1945, he told his accomplice, Dieter Wisliceny, that if caught, he would leap into his grave laughing. He believed that although he did not complete the total destruction of European Jewry, he had accomplished his basic goal- because the Jews could never recover from this devastation of their life center. Indeed, Eichmann had destroyed 90 percent of East European Jewry, the spiritual and biological vital center of prewar world Jewry. Six million Jews were

killed- some 7 percent of the Jewish people in 1939 ; but among the dead were over 80 percent of the Jewish scholars, rabbis, full-time students and teachers of Torah alive in 1939.⁴⁰ Since there can be no covenant without the covenant people, the fundamental existence of Jews and Judaism is thrown into question by this genocide. For this reason alone, the trauma of the Holocaust cannot be overcome without some basic reorientation in light of it by the surviving Jewish community...⁴¹

The Holocaust as

Radical Counter-Testimony

For Christians, it is easier to continue living as if the event did not make any difference, as if the crime belongs to the history of another people and faith. But such a conclusion would be and is sheer self-deception. The magnitude of suffering and the manifest worthlessness of human life radically contradict the fundamental statements of human value and divine concern in both religions. Failure to confront and account for evil, then, would turn both religions into empty, Pollyanna assertions, credible only because believers ignore the realities of human history. It would be comparable to preaching that this is the best of all possible worlds to a well-fed, smug congregation, while next door little children starve slowly to death.⁴²

Judaism and Christianity do not merely tell of God's love for man, but stand or fall on their fundamental claim that the human being is, therefore, of infinite and absolute value, (" He who saves one life it is as if he saved an entire world" - found in the Talmud, Sanhedrin 37a; " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son" - John 3:16) ⁴³ It is the contradiction of this

intrinsic value and the reality of human suffering that validates the absolute centrality and necessity of redemption, of the Messianic hope.

The Holocaust

The Challenge

to Modern Culture

For the world the Holocaust was an event which changed fundamental perceptions. Limits were broken, restraints shattered, that never will be recovered, and henceforth mankind must live with the dread of a world in which models for unlimited evil exist...⁴⁴

The Demonic

in the Modern World

...No assessment of modern culture can ignore the fact that science and technology- the accepted flower and glory of modernity- now climaxed in the factories of death; the awareness that the unlimited, value-free use of knowledge and science, which man perceives as the great force for improving human conditions, had paved the way for the bureaucratic and scientific death campaign. There is the shock of recognition that the humanistic revolt, celebrated as the liberation of humankind of freeing man from centuries of dependence upon God and nature, is now revealed --at the very heart of the enterprise- to sustain a capacity for death and demonic evil...⁴⁵

One of the most striking things about the *Einsatzgruppen* leadership makeup is the prevalence of educated people, professionals, especially lawyers, doctors, P.H.D.'s. and yes, even a clergyman.⁴⁶

As Arnold Toynbee, the famous historian, put it, "a Western nation, which for good or evil, has played so central a part in Western history.. could hardly have committed these flagrant crimes had they not been fostering foully beneath the surface of life in the Western world's non-German provinces... If a twentieth-century German was a monster, then, by the same token a twentieth-century Western civilization was a Frankenstein of having been the author of this German monster's being."⁴⁷ This responsibility must be shared not only by Christianity, but by the Enlightenment ⁴⁸ and democratic cultures as well. Their apathy and encouragement strengthened the will and capacity of murderers to carry out the genocide, even as moral resistance and condemnation weakened that capacity. In the Holocaust there was a total moral failure of universalism of the ideologies of universal human values too.

The Holocaust as an Orienting Event and Revelation

For both Judaism and Christianity (and other religions of salvation- both secular and sacred) there is no choice but to confront the Holocaust, because it happened, and because the first Holocaust is the hardest. The fact of the Holocaust makes a repetition more likely- a limit was broken, a control or awe is gone- and the murder procedure is now better laid out and understood. Failure to confront it makes a repetition all the more likely. So evil is the Holocaust, and so powerful a challenge to all norms, that it forces a response; not to respond is to collaborate in its repetition.⁴⁹

The Holocaust cannot be used for triumphalism either. Its moral challenges must also be applied to Jews. Those Jews who feel not guilty for

the Holocaust are also tempted to moral apathy. Religious Jews who use the Holocaust to morally impugn every other religious groups but their own are the ones who are tempted thereby into indifference at the Holocaust of others (cf. the general policy of the American Orthodox rabbinate on United States Vietnam policy).⁵⁰

Neither faith nor morality can function without serious twisting of perspective, even to the point of becoming demonic, unless they are illuminated by the fires of Auschwitz and Treblinka.⁵¹

The Dialectical Revelation of the Holocaust

The Holocaust challenges the claims of all the standards that compete for modern man's loyalties. Nor does it give simple, clear answers or definite solutions. To claim that it does is not to take burning children seriously. This sure will- and should- undercut the ultimate adequacy of any category, unless there were one (religious, political, intellectual) that consistently produced the proper response of resistance and horror at the Holocaust.⁵² The Holocaust offers only dialectical moves and understandings- often moves that stretch man's capacity to limit and torment him with their irresolvable tensions. In a sense, it is the only morally tenable way for survivors and those guilty of bystanding to live. Woe to those so at ease that they fee no guilt or tension.⁵³ Many Germans motivated by guilt went to Israel on pilgrimages of repentance. Many of them young people, too young to have participated in the Holocaust; or, more often, persons of the children of persons who had been anti-Nazi or even imprisoned for resistance.

Resistance to New Revelation

Much of classic Jewish and Christian tradition will resist the claim that there have been new revelatory events after the Holocaust. Judaism has remained faithful to the covenant of Sinai and rejected this claim when expressed in the life of Jesus as understood by St. Paul and the Christian church, or in the career of Sabbatai Zevi, [the false messiah], and others.⁵⁴ The very quality of faithfulness to the covenant resist acceptance of new revelation- as it should. Human nature's love for the familiar conspires with faithfulness to keep new norms out. But no one said that the Holocaust should be simply assimilable.⁵⁵ There must be an alternative for traditional Jews whose faith can pass through the demonic, consuming flames of a crematorium ; it is the willingness and ability to hear further revelation and reorient themselves. That is the way to wholeness. A famous rabbi, Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, once said that there is no heart so whole as a broken heart. After Auschwitz, there is no faith so whole as a faith shattered - and refused- in the ovens.⁵⁶

Classic Christianity is tempted to deny further revelation after Easter. Christianity testified and built itself on the finality of revelation in Christ's life and teaching. Yet, as it core, Christianity claims that God sent a second revelation, which grew out of the ground of acknowledged covenant, superseded the authority of the first revelation, and even supplied a new, higher understanding of the first event.⁵⁷ The Holocaust should be a new revelation for Christianity too.

The desire to guarantee absolute salvation and understanding is an all too human need which both religions must resist as a snare and temptation. Just as refusal to encounter the Holocaust brings a nemesis of moral and

religious ineffectiveness, openness and willingness to undergo the ordeal of reorienting by the event could well save or illuminate the treasure that is still contained in each tradition. ⁵⁸

The Central Religious Testimony After the Holocaust Recreating Human Life

In the silence of God and of theology, there is one fundamental testimony that can still be given- the testimony of human life itself. This was always the basic evidence, but after the Holocaust its import is incredibly heightened. In fact, it is the only testimony that can still be heard. ⁵⁹

The vast number of death and morally destroyed is the phenomenon of absurdity and meaninglessness that shouts down all talk of God and human worth. The Holocaust is even model and pedagogy for future generations that genocide can be carried out with impunity- one need fear neither of God nor man. There is one response to such overwhelming tragedy: the reaffirmation of meaningfulness, worth, and life - through acts of love and life-giving. ⁶⁰ The act of creating a life or enhancing its dignity is the counter-testimony to the Holocaust. To talk of love and of God who cares in the presence of the burning children is obscene and incredible; to leap and pull a child out of a pit, to clean its face and heal its body, is to take the most powerful statement- the only statement that counts. ⁶¹

In the first moment after the Flood, with its testimony of absurd and mass human death, Noah is given two instructions- the only two that can testify after such an event. "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9: 1-7), and "but your life blood I will hold you responsible for - who sheds man's blood, shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He

man." (Gen. 9:5-6)⁶² Each act of creating a life, each act of enhancing or holding people responsible for human life, becomes multiplied in its resonance because it contradicts the mass graves of biblical Shinar-or Treblinka.⁶³

Jewish history affirms hope - hope of redemption and of a better world. The cloud of smoke of the bodies by day and the pillar of fire of the crematoria by night may yet guide humanity to a goal and a day when human beings are attached to each other; and have so much shared each other's pain, and have so purified and criticized themselves, that *never again will a Holocaust be possible*. Perhaps all mankind can pray that out of the welter of blood and pain will come a chastened mankind and faith that may take some tentative and mutual steps toward redemption.

Lessons from Moral Indifference in the Holocaust

In the Holocaust mankind confronts, for the first time in history, the modern form of evil. This is manifested in four areas. First, modern organization of work engendered moral indifference. Second, some of the intended victims in Eastern Europe sensed something of the radically new nature of the evil confronting them. In that milieu many had looked for generations to Germany as a Western beacon of modernity and rationality, and so the place whence would come the forces for liberating oppressed minorities in the contemporary backward East. They apprehended that the opposite was upon them, a bureaucratized efficiency of destruction, *death sine ira et studio*.⁶⁴ They made themselves survive to let mankind know. Mankind owes it to them and all who died to comprehend this truth. Third,

for the Germans this means getting rid of the false alibi created at the Nuremberg trials where the SS(*Schutzstaffel*) was declared as a criminal organization. The awesome suffering and death was not primarily brought about by the Nazis who were driven by a racial ideology ; it was realized because the vast majority simply did not care. That deepens the stain on German history. Fourth, for all those who now live as citizens of nuclear powers or countries allied with them, the fact that the Holocaust was revealed makes quite clear that it is not enough to disdain the rhetoric of pride and hate in Germany. As one German scholar stated "the Germans and all nations must learn to keep the technologically feasible, a global nuclear winter, constantly before their eyes. It can bring a truly final solution to all human problems. And we must realize, more than we care to, our personal responsibility in having placed the survival of humanity at risk, if only by our role as taxpayers. And having grasped just how much sheer moral indifference contributed to the Holocaust, we must train ourselves to become afraid of our customized ways of getting along at work and getting ahead, these daily experiences of the segmentalized other and self as statistics that seduce us into moral indifference."⁶⁵

The Holocaust :

Moral Theory

and Immoral Acts

Moral ethics of the perpetrators and bystanders were bankrupt in the Holocaust. Thus, there is a fundamental lesson to be learned that in absence of sound moral theory immoral acts by the Nazis and their collaborators were considered moral.

Susan Sontag writes that " one's first encounter with the photographic

inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation : a negative epiphany. For me it was the photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau. Nothing I have seen... ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously."⁶⁶

This text may be contrasted with three others : one, by Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, a second by Adolf Eichmann, and finally one by an anonymous railroad official.

Rudolf Hoess, while in prison in Poland, awaiting his execution, wrote a revealing, self pitying autobiography. At its conclusion, speaking of himself in the third person, he stated : " He too, had a heart, and ... was not evil."⁶⁷ Adolf Eichmann during his police interrogation in Jerusalem, and later at his trial asserted that " he lived his whole life according to Kant's moral precepts, and especially according to the Kantian definition of duty".⁶⁸ The remarks of both Hoess and Eichmann possess a ring of truth ; they were not, at least in the obvious sense, self-serving, and express sincerely held views. What does it mean that the commander of the largest death camp in which millions were systematically and deliberately killed, that the person who commanded the machinery of death at Auschwitz, would say about himself that " he was a good man"?

Raul Hilberg, the author of the monumental book Destruction of European Jews, recounts the following experience:

In my quest for railroad documents I went to the headquarters of the German railways... Two people approached me. I told them that I was interested in civilian passenger traffic during World War II. Ah,' said one of them, ' Auschwitz! Treblinka!' Somewhat astonished by the quick recognition of what I was asking for from my sheer expression of interest in special trains, I asked him how could he know ? And he said, 'Oh railroad people get around.' He had seen the ghettos. He had been to Katyn. He was the first one there when the grave, with all those Polish officers shot by the Soviets, was opened.

After lunch we came back to the office... He explained the technical matters concerning the trains... And then he said ' I have seen Auschwitz.' I said to myself : Perhaps this is a German who made a pilgrimage after the war. Aloud I said ' Did you make a pilgrimage?' ' Oh, no. I was there, then.' ' What did you there ?' ' I put up the signal equipment.' ⁶⁹

All these and many more statements demonstrate the poverty of contemporary ethical theory that is unable to deal with individual acts carried on in the service of the state and in the service of an ideology or theological doctrines. The racial anti-Semitic policies of the Nazis and their collaborators received support from those who were anti-Semitic out of religious convictions. When Archbishop Kametko of Nitra in Slovakia was approached to intervene to stop deportations, he said that " It is not just a matter of deportation. You will not die there of hunger and disease. They will slaughter all of you there, old and young alike, women and children, at once- it is the punishment that you deserve for the death of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ- you have only one solution. Come over to our religion and we will work to annul this decree." ⁷⁰

Nothing permits holding that such views were not sincerely held, or even that they were un-Christian. ⁶⁸ Deportations in Slovakia were carried out while the head of its government was a Catholic priest (Father Tiso). None of the priests who were members of the Slovak Parliament voted against that body's post hoc authorization of the deportations. No one has been excommunicated for participation in the Holocaust. ⁷¹ Serbian priests participated in all aspects of political life, including extermination squads ; the Franciscans were especially noted for their leadership. ⁷² Half of the twenty-two Croatian extermination camps were headed by priests. ⁷³

The commitment to ideals, the human capacity for transcendence, rather than simple selfishness accounts for most of the horrors of human

history. The most destructive acts and millenarial aspirations were also present in the Holocaust.⁷⁴ The theologian John T. Pawlikowski writes that the Holocaust "has clearly revealed the dangers in building a society... without any reference to transcendent ethical norms. A primary task ...is the development of a sense of transcendence"⁷⁵

The Need for New Morality

What is the lesson concerning the need of a new morality after the Holocaust?

In contrast to other times, the contemporary world is still characterized by an anarchy of values, with no common ground for discourse between them. The desire to make the world to conform to ideals frequently leads to ever escalating violence when others (who are defined as evil) support alternative values. Not only is there no consensus of values, but means of validating one value system, against another does not exist. Indeed the thrust of contemporary theory is that in contrast to propositions in science, for which a nearly universally accepted system of verification exists, value propositions are in the last analysis only acts of will. Hence force and violence rather than reason will be the arbiter between competing systems.⁷⁶ The lesson must be that unless a world of moral ethics and mutual acceptance, that all men are created equal, is created the Holocaust can be and will be repeated. "Never Again" must be translated into reality.

The magnitude of the Holocaust not only in numbers but in scope, in its unprecedented union of sadistic and rational action, has produced a loss of innocence. For those who have experienced the Holocaust, for those who have examined the events, the world appears different. This is not only

manifested by a sense of disquietude that creates insecurity because the Holocaust revealed a hitherto unfathomed level of human actions, but the knowledge that ordinary people have the capability of doing what was done raises questions about the meaning of being human.

Although it has not penetrated modern consciousness, the Holocaust has destroyed the Enlightenment's view of fundamental human goodness and potential perfectibility. Even though few recognize it as such, the Holocaust was a transformational event that has radically altered the world.⁷⁷ The demonstration that what was hitherto regarded as unthinkable could happen has eroded trust. The old image of human nature has been basically altered, though most continue as if nothing happened.⁷⁸

The Holocaust as a Test of Philosophy and Education

It has been clear for sometime that the Holocaust is a challenge to the very meaning of our civilization. It is now apparent that it is also a challenge to philosophy.⁷⁹

The claim that the Holocaust is a profound and significant event constituting a major watershed in world history is often made. Some historians call it a "central event for our time... because what died at Auschwitz was the promise and hope embodied in Western civilization."⁸⁰ Emil Fackenheim, the famous philosopher, claims that the Holocaust was epoch making: "The world...like the Jewish world...can never be the same."⁸¹ Its impact was so momentous that Alvin Rosenfeld and Irving Greenberg stated that "the Holocaust...like other singular and transforming events...has changed our way of being in the world and our way of looking at

it."⁸² Elie Wiesel points out that "...at Auschwitz not only man died, but the idea of man."⁸³ "The message of these statements is that the Holocaust must be understood as an epoch-making event, that it is "transformational" in its historical impact, and yet these same writers confess that no such impact is evident. The "transformational" event has had no "transforming" impact. Thus for example, Wiesel dramatically writes, "Nothing has been learned, Auschwitz has not served as a warning. For more detailed information, consult your daily newspapers."⁸⁴

What is important for philosophers and educators to recognize and analyze is that the Holocaust has challenged, if not destroyed, the popular belief that science and technology would lead inevitably to progress. The belief that science is "privileged" and that technologies would always be available to ameliorate, if not to solve human problems was rooted in the idea of an earthly paradise, of the fulfillment of human beings on earth, rather than on the transcendental heaven. It is this ideal that was so brutally confronted by the Holocaust.⁸⁵

The Immorality of Science and Technology

The Holocaust was made possible largely by both science and technology. Technology and modern science gave the tools that in the twentieth century made mass destruction possible. The prominent symbol of the idea of progress for humanity is the smokestack, the symbol of Auschwitz. The facilities of modern science and technology helped to generate vast bureaucratic procedures that made the processing of millions for extermination into a relatively orderly routine. Thus, instead of solely

aiding humanity in its quest for perfection, science and technology also taught it newer and easier means of murder and destruction of large number of people; in the twentieth century the art of mass murder had become the science of mass murder. Killing was made another means of mass production, processing or recycling bodies of dead was another form of industrial output. As Richard Rubinstein has written, "Bureaucratic mass murder reached its fullest development when gas chambers with the capacity for killing two thousand people at a time were installed at Auschwitz."⁸⁶

Along with methods of mass killing, science also legitimized the ideological basis, or the motivating cause, for mass murder. The Jews, along with the Gypsies, Slavs, and millions of others, were "scientifically" decreed inferior races or designated as "life unworthy of life." The fact that these claims were advanced and even believed in the name of science, and were expounded by scientific authorities, lent, a high degree of credence to popular prejudices and made the acceptance of the idea of mass extermination so much easier for a large number of people.⁸⁷ After all, under these "scientific" claims, what was taking place was not killing for killing's sake. Rather, it was a deliberate "scientific" undertaking to correct the errors of the past by removal of the causes of these errors, and to improve the best in racial stock of a nation so that it would become better and stronger in the future. It was a "progressive" effort toward the attainment of the holiest of the Enlightenment's ideals: perfection.⁸⁸ In recognition of this factor Hannah Arendt has written that "there is very little doubt that the perpetrators [of the Holocaust] committed (these crimes) for the sake of their ideology which they believed to be proven by science, experience and the laws of life."⁸⁹

In the context of the Holocaust, functional reason led to a bureaucratic and "scientific-technical solution to the Jewish problem." What must be

reckoned with here is that the mode of reasoning whose roots are perhaps in Bacon and Descartes by the Enlightenment ends up finally sanctioning the means whereby enormous number of humans are eliminated.⁹⁰ Moreover, it is this mode of thought that fundamentally underlies bureaucracy as such ; it leads to the treatment of problems by means of bureaucratic solutions. For a great many German officials the " Jewish problem" was merely something that could be solved by finding the right bureaucratic solution. There can be little doubt that were this not the case- were not functional reason in control - the technology of death, which so clearly differentiates the Holocaust from the pogroms of the past, would not have been possible. It is this " scientific -technical-bureaucratic " mentality that comprises one of the necessary conditions for the creation of giant factories of death used to implement the Final Solution.⁹¹

The " scientific-technical-bureaucratic " mentality functions to insulate the practitioner from ethical consequences of his action. " Ends " in the sense of moral goals- are excluded from deliberations. Focusing on the task at hand as simply a "given" fact, this mentality asks only for the most efficient means of carrying out the task. Bureaucrats felt free to adopt almost any means necessary for the efficient accomplishments of their assignments. The questions of moral responsibility for the consequences of the adoption of particular means simply did not arise ; such questions lied outside the domain of expertise in which the " scientific-technical-bureaucrat " is trained to function.⁹² Nazi medical doctors had the ability to carry on their scientific " experiments " and " research " with an attitude of professionalism and ordinariness associated with the work done at any university laboratory. They had the capacity to focus on their work more or less decontextualized and without any moral awareness or responsibility about the "true " meaning of their murderous behavior.⁹³

One of the important factors that fostered this moral evasion was the Nazi use of language. This protected the bureaucracy from comprehending the fact and nature of their crimes. The rigid language system of the bureaucrats prevented them from equating their actions with their old "normal moral" knowledge of murder and lies. Such euphemism as "Final Solution", "evacuation," and "special treatment" were used to help the murderers avoid confrontations with the meaning of their actions. Thus, the moral revulsion that ordinary labels would arouse could be readily suppressed through this "camouflage vocabulary," and the bureaucratic killing could proceed on its routine course.⁹⁴ Within the scientific technical bureaucratic context with its new language rules emerged a new kind of executioner unique to the Holocaust- the "desk killer."⁹⁵

The "Desk Killer"

The "desk killer" is an executive type, a functionary in the vast bureaucratic organization, who does the killing from behind a desk without yielding any weapons more lethal than a typewriter and dictaphone, with which he deals out order of death. He never sees the faces of those he consigns to the gas chambers, his concern is with numbers. The "desk killer" has mastered the art of functional reason, or it has mastered him, so that the killing of millions of people is an action that is totally devoid of moral responsibility. It is merely a matter of logistics, of carrying out an order given by higher authority in the name of the state.⁹⁶ The phenomenon of the "desk killer" with its frightening implications for the potential evil actions of an ordinary person, is a necessary condition of the Holocaust. As Lionel Rubinoﬀ has observed, "Men acquired the capacity for engaging in evil

without experiencing it as such. They learned how to perform evil acts as part of their job description."⁹⁷ As Hannah Arendt implies, this means that the whole notion of evil as it was conveniently understood must be radically revised to give it the broadest possible implications. Arendt says that the Holocaust "has brought into the world a radical evil characterized by its divorce from all humanly comprehensible motives of wickedness."⁹⁸

Lessons for Educators and Philosophers

Educators and philosophers must learn from the Holocaust and teach that defining evil must be expanded, that universal moral obligations must be established and a coherent set of values must be created. The genocidal universe the Nazis created, the universe of death, the Final Solution, calls into question the most basic assumptions about the possibilities of human spirit. Educators and philosophers must dedicate themselves to wider questions of human meaning and worth. There must be a new vision of society and mankind.

The Crisis in Knowing and Understanding the Holocaust

"If we are to begin to understand ourselves we must somehow come to grips with the reality of Auschwitz." ⁹⁹ (Karl A. Scheuness, 1972)

Holocaust studies are at a turning point. It is known what happened ; now the challenge is to understand this event, to move from recounting the

facts to assimilating their meanings. 100

The Protestant theologian, Robert McAfee Brown stated it in the following way:

I think we are finally challenged by the Holocaust to the daring and frightening notion that an obscenity can be used as a way of forestalling other obscenities. If we can so affirm, then there is hope that the Holocaust, unredeemably evil in itself, could be a grotesque beacon in the light of which we could gird ourselves against its repetition toward any people, in any time, in any place. And I believe that unless we can use it as a beacon, the Nazis have finally won. 101

Is the significance of the Holocaust understood in the personal life of individuals and in societies of the post-Holocaust era ?

Could an individual understand the significance of the Holocaust and have integrated it into his or her mental and moral world and yet remain an anti-Semite or a racist? The Holocaust would have been inconceivable without "the practice of social anti-Semitism which undermined the ordinary German's ordinary decency and " their resistance.. to the stigmatization and persecution to come." 102 Can ordinary American claim to have reflected seriously on the genocidal destruction that took place during the Second World War, and stand by while peoples once again are being destroyed?" 103 Alan Rosenberg argues that " not only do we as nation stood by while groups of people were destroyed, we used the same language of indifference, as well as the same language of empty gesture that was used by the onlooking nations during the Holocaust ?" 104

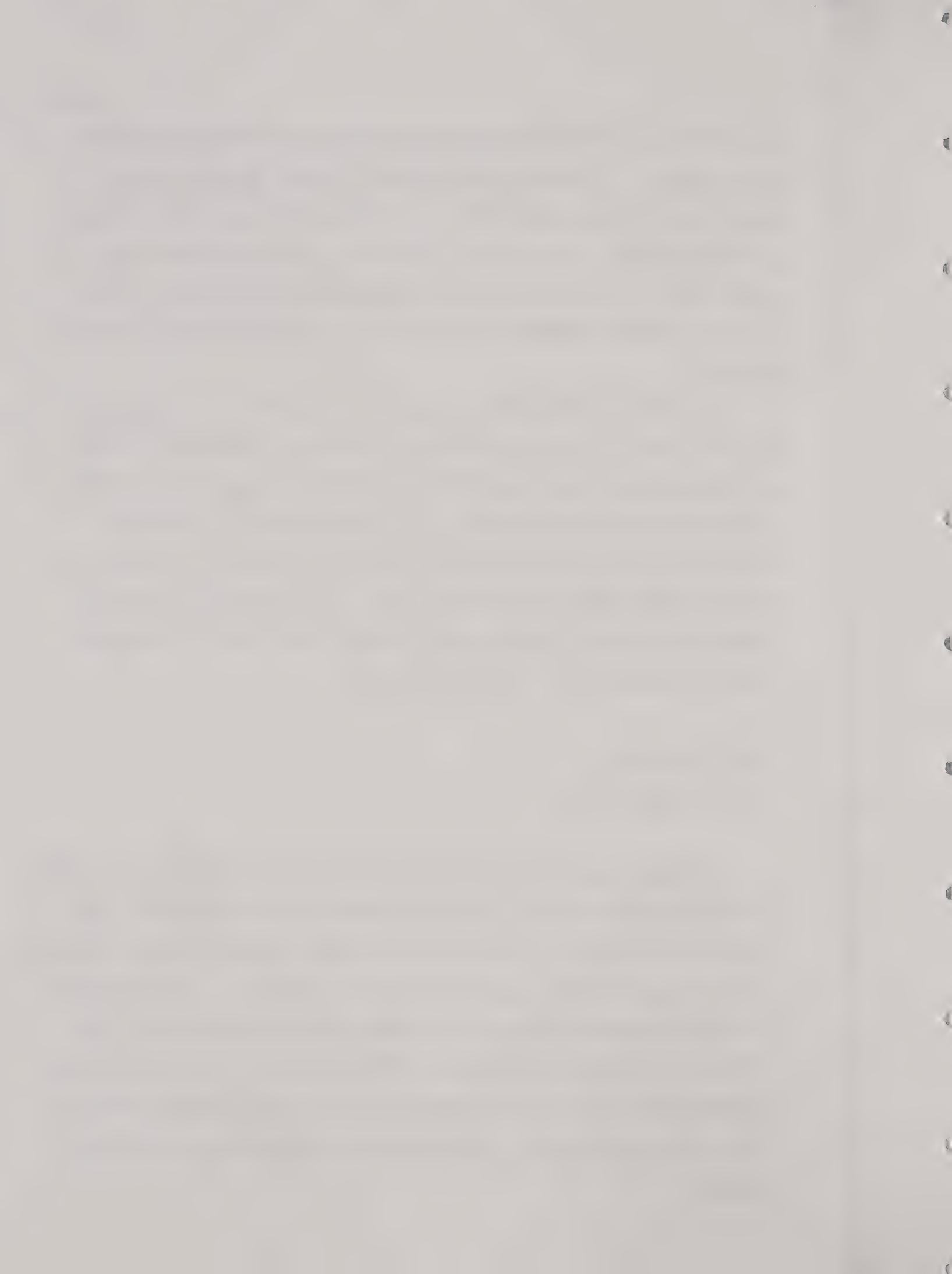
Many scholars believe that while there is a much greater factual knowledge of the Holocaust, its understanding did not integrate into one's moral and intellectual life. *Understanding* the Holocaust in this sense would radically change how one experiences and acts in the world. The Holocaust

would become a standard for evaluating both one's own behavior and that one's society.¹⁰⁵ Those who integrate the Holocaust, this great human tragedy, into consciousness find that their world becomes a different world and they must generate a new way, a better way, a more humanistic and humane way, a more reasonable way, a more understanding way, a more passionate and loving way to be in the new world and reborn world after the Holocaust.

The Holocaust must be remembered and understood. A large part of the world *wants* to forget the Holocaust; it acts as if it never happened; it even resent being reminded of it. Our civilization on the whole would like to forget or minimize the Holocaust, not only because many of its major institutions actively or passively participated in it, but also because the Holocaust shakes the value structure of this civilization to its very core. When taken seriously, the Holocaust demands a thorough re-evaluation of most of values that the societies in the West hold.¹⁰⁶

The Frightening Reality of the Holocaust

The human mind slowly awakened to the reality of the Holocaust after V-E Day. The Nuremberg, *Einsatzkommando*, and Eichmann trials. Man now could not help but "believe the unbelievable," as the Polish underground frantically cabled London during the summer of 1942.¹⁰⁷ The same liberals who reassuringly thought that Adolf Hitler could be placated in the 1930s now had to grapple with the existence of evil incarnate, as well as their own fundamental inaction at a time when men, women, and children pleaded for the sacred breath of life.¹⁰⁸ The Holocaust emerged as the great human tragedy.



The Indifference to the Holocaust

A methodical German fervor to destroy not matched by an Allied will to save carried out the inconceivable. In January, 1994, Arthur Koestler, warned about the current disbelief in Nazi *Endlösung*: "A dog run over by a car upsets our emotional balance and digestion; three million Jews killed in Poland cause but a moderate uneasiness. . . We are unable to embrace the total process with our awareness ; we can only focus on little lumps of reality."¹⁰⁹ The indifference to deeds of barbarism also stemmed from Western civilization's gradual loss of the sense of solidarity.¹¹⁰ A slow decay of conscience took place in the world before and while the storm clouds rolled across Europe. Without that loss of a sense of certain decencies, the Jews, many of whom resisted Nazi attempts of dehumanization and miraculously adhered to their basic values *de profundis*,¹¹¹ would not have been abandoned into the night. Christianity and Western humanism avoided the moral imperative to try to save an innocent people, including 1,500,000 children who perished, and through their silence became accomplice to mass murder. The kingdom of barbed wire and ashes, as a consequence, enjoyed an unbridled reign.¹¹²

Mankind has forgotten too soon. "Something terrible had fallen like a meteorite into history"¹¹³ was expressed by a survivor in years later, when the Holocaust showed the whole world that the blood of a people could be shed with impunity. The seeker after an etiology for modern day genocides in Tibet, Bangladesh, Biafra, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Somalia, Yugoslavia should scrutinize Babi Yar, Sobibor, and the diaries of the *Sonderkommandos*. The post-Holocaust recognition what Emil Fackenheim

denominated " radical evil" must, in turn, be a guide to radical humanist action.¹¹⁴ Only thus can the victims be snatched from oblivion and complacency give way to personal commitment. Once and for all, the calamitous fallacy that what happens in one part of the globe is not another's affair must be shed, lest one day a brother's keeper be again found wanting in the face of extremity. The madness of escalating arms race that currently casts a lengthening shadow of omnicide - the transformation of our planet into a universal nuclear crematorium - mandates that active compassion which flows from mutual need replace the crime of indifference.¹¹⁵

The Meaning of the Holocaust

Sensitive writers like Elie Wiesel and Emil Fackenheim have warned against applying too facile explanations to the Holocaust and drawing too ready conclusions from it. The warning is especially pertinent for those whose normal intellectual discourse strains toward abstractions, generalizations, and rules. Certainly the warning must be heeded by gentiles, and when it comes from who personally experienced the terror of the " Final Solution," common decency commends silence. But the mind is drawn back repeatedly to the evidence of *the mass murder of Jews by Christians in the heart of Christendom*.¹¹⁶ Unless events are meaningless, in which case the biblical world view must be rejected as false, the compulsion to rest the signs rest heavily upon any who think and feel.

The Meaning of the Holocaust for non-Jews

The critical long range question is how the Christians are to re-establish their credibility vis-a-vis humanity, signalized in the concrete historical situation by the way they rework their relationship to the Jewish people.¹¹⁷ The Holocaust was the consumation of centuries of false teaching and practice, and until the churches come clean on this "model" situation, very little they have to say about the plight of other victimized and helpless persons and groups will carry authority. There is a symbolic line from Auschwitz to Mylai, but what the churches have to say about the Mylai massacre will not be heard until their voice is clear on Auschwitz.¹¹⁸

The meaning of the Holocaust for Christians must be built into the confessions of faith and remembered in the hymns and prayers. That was the turn in the road that most of the churches missed, and many of them are still plodding down a dead-end trail that leads away from the Kingdom of God.¹¹⁹ "We Christians," writes Franklin H. Littell, "must go back to the turn in the road and reject the signs and signals which,, expressing a spiritual and intellectual teaching which was false through, familiar, turned us toward Auschwitz."

Karl Barth, the German theologian who criticized the Confessing Church in Germany in 1936 for having shown no sympathy for millions suffering injustice, stated a fatal error of Christianity: "The question of the Jews is the questions of Christ."¹²⁰ "Anti-Semitism is a sin against the Holy Ghost."¹²¹ For Christians anti-Semitism is not just a peculiarly nasty form of prejudice, anti-Semitism is blasphemy- a much more serious matter.¹²²

"The Christians must draw the knife on their own anti-semitism for the sake of truth, not to save the church but for the love of Jesus of Nazareth and his people."¹²³ Christians and Jews need each other. "The Jewish people can define itself in history without Christianity. Christians cannot establish a self-

identity except in relationship to the Jewish people- past and present, and whenever the Christians have attempted to do so, they have fallen into grievous heresy and sin." 124

Nazism was in no sense a revolt against "religion" and "spirituality." Neither was it "secularistic." Quite contrary; in its central creed the party affirmed a devotion to *positives Christentum*. The *Fuhrer* and other party orators made constant reference to "divine providence," "spiritual renewal", "moment of decision", "immortal destiny", "Christian front against materialism", and the like. 125 Many of the party hymns were simply new words written to popular gospel songs, with the same brass bands marching and evoking from crowds the same emotional response. The key question, and here the issue of "heresy" arises, according to Littel, is why the millions of baptized and confirmed Christians had no sense that they were now responding to visions of programs antithetical to biblical faith. 126

The answer is that most church leaders and theologians had already cast off any binding obedience to what the Bible teaches in stories and precepts and had relativized and adapted what they still retained to fit patriotic and ethnic claims. The common folk received little help from such leaders to distinguish between "religious devotion" and Christian faithfulness. 127

The meaning of the Holocaust for Christians is summarized by Littel in the following way :

when the baptized betray their baptism, when those who have been grafted into history flee back out of history, when the 'new men' and 'new women' in Christ cast off the new life and become part of the dying age again, the 'old Israel' is left alone as the sign that God who is God yet rules and that- in spite of all world conquerers and posturing false prophets- his Kingdom shall triumph in the end. *For Christians only* : We must begin

our agonizing self-assessment and reappraisal with the fact that in a season of betrayal and faithlessness the vast majority of the martyrs for the Lord of history were Jews. The Jewish people carried history while Christians fled headlong from their professed vocation.

The time of testing ended in death for six million Jews and apostasy by uncouthed millions of Christians. The critical factor was the same in both cases : *peoplehood*. The Jews died because they were standing alone and not numbered among the nations of the earth. The Christians, with the exception of a minority of martyrs and confessors , betrayed the life into which they were called. 128

Emil Fackenheim stated that "Civilization must struggle with the memory of the Holocaust because it cannot afford to bury it." 129

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CHAPTER 13

Remembrance and Legacy

The Trauma of
Holocaust Survivors:
How will the Holocaust
be Remembered ?

Many Holocaust survivors have deep, personal dilemma, especially how will their children remember? Sometimes the burning issue is a collision of two generations; the haunting memories of the older and the rather typical desire for instant gratification of the younger.

The following case will be an illustration of this problem. A Holocaust survivor lived in Montreal. Her son married and was looking for a house to buy. The owners of a house her son and his wife found suitable were Herr and Frau S. who planned to emigrate back to Germany, their native country which they left after World War II.

Herr and Frau S's resolve to leave for their native country brought forth suspicion by their neighbors and friends of their past collaborationism in Nazi Germany.

The agony of the mother started. The present dwelling of her son became to her a replica of the barracks that housed her for twelve months in Neusalts labor camp and Bergen-Belsen concentration camp for the rest of World War II.¹ On Her imagination in the big trees surrounding the house she saw armed SS. She also saw even dogs hunting and sniffing around, loke in those olden days when let loose to attack defenseless Jews.

The mother was hoping that the son will understand her and put the house up for resale. She could not bear the thought of him living, breathing, and being surrounded in a nook built by hands which might have in the past constructed mechanism of torture and destruction that caused pain and suffering of her and her people.²

The mother conceded to a friend that the situation created was her problem and her concern only:

I am a product of another era, another time. Another world- a world in which high minded human moral took precedence over material acquisitions. Tradition was a stabilizing factor in our society and a fundamental part of our life...

I also know that my horrible Holocaust experiences are mine alone. Notwithstanding the fact that the children of the Holocaust survivors carry the burden of guilt being exposed as the audience of our harrowing past. The overprotection and often our alarmist behavior produced in them symptoms and characteristics inherent in us Holocaust survivors.

From my side I realize that as a parent for the giving I have done I could not except reciprocal obligations...Nevertheless I have expectations and this creates a dilemma.

We met and I presented my case. He was taken aback abruptly. He did not realize the hurt he caused. Yes, he understood and empathized with me. However, 'Mother', he pleaded, '- open your eyes and realistic'-he begged. 'It is the year 1990. Holocaust is distant history. Almost fifty years have passed. Your world is only partly mine. I did always try to fulfill your expectations, to compensate for what you have lost because of the Holocaust. Your affections and overprotectiveness are the highs and lows of my being. Even now though my identity is formed, all the above feeling lurk in the corners of my psyche and are revitalized when special situations arise. Your misfortune of the past will permanently be part of me.' I suddenly saw the little boy, my little boy. His reassuring words let me to decide that I will allow time to elapse, to wait and see.

'But wait for what?' I thought to myself. 'A sharp break is readily apparent in the continuity of Jewish living, and consequently a growing diminution of Jewish group memory here and now is what counts.' My son, the activist, the lawyer, the defender for civil rights, the father of his children, the husband, the owner of a house that his mother abhors is an entity of progress, of the now, of tomorrow, of the future. I am part of history, a charred leaf in the history of yester-years, of a vanished world and fallen mankind; but he is my son and I'll wait and see.³

The Trauma of Survivors Continues

Nobody can measure the depth of pain the events of the Holocaust evoke when remembered by survivors. Neither can most people understand how enormous of shame and guilt can be that a witness may carry.

Here is an illustration based on a survivor's experience:⁴

I was in 1944 in Gleiwitz, a work camp of Auschwitz. I was being held in the so-called "sick barrack", a place where prisoners who were classified as no longer to fit to work were herded together to wait for a return transport to Auschwitz, and of course, to certain death. I noticed in the yard of the barracks a young Jewish man of 14 or 15. In any other place he would have been considered a child; here, he was a prisoner in Auschwitz.

The child was giggling and laughing. The child-prisoner's laughter infuriated a German SS officer, who sadistically beat him, only to hear increased laughter from the young prisoner. The German officer, in his new winter uniform with a shining emblem of a skull and cross bones, ordered the sick child to remove all his clothing. Then he pushed him into the 'pit.' The 'pit' served as the outhouse for the prisoners."

I, who at that time was young boy himself and naive, prayed that

"same angel that held back Abraham's lifted hand from sacrificing Isaac would come to save this child in the 'pit.'"
I hoped to hear a thundering command, "Do not harm this child." But no miracle happened.

" On that crisp and sunny autumn day in upper Silezia, in almost total stillness, the husky, strong officer, the pride of Germany, used a long piece of lumber to push down the child until the child could no longer be seen, until the laughter stopped, until he drowned. Then with fiendish glee, the German said aloud, '*Dreck zum Dreck*.'"

The survivor summarized his agony :

Numbness prevented me from feeling great anguish, but in my heart I knew who was the 'dreck' and who was the pure and holy. I looked at the disappearing figure of that emaciated young man and felt a strong sense of envy because he would not suffer any more and he would not be alone, so painfully alone any more."

45 years later the memory of that event still haunts the survivor:

Now, when I look back at the three people- the German, the drowned young man, and myself, the witness - what do I understand ?

The German, although cultured and educated, was totally consumed by an insane hate that filled the space where morality and ethics, compassion and conscience should have been, a hate that turned him and masses of Germans into monsters.

The young man was driven to insanity probably as the price for holding on too long to his humanity and former identity. Having lost the ability to believe in a miracle for his survival, he ended his suffering in an insane laughter.

I, the witness, having experienced daily, without let up, so much cruelty and inhumanity, had become indifferent to my own fate, with my senses and sensitivities dulled and dying. Somehow I was aware with much shame, that I had become part of a mass of

our people who came to accept as normal our own degradation and destruction without rebellion or resentment.

Some Survivors ,
Even to this Day,
View the World
through " Holocaust Eyes. "

Some survivors stockpile food " just in case." Survivors get anxious at the sight of police officers. Survivors won't go out the house without an extra sweater, a box of crackers or money for emergencies.⁵ When survivors meet someone they might get close to, they wonder ; "Can I trust this person? If a disaster were to happen, would he help me or turn me in?"⁶

A major problem for many Holocaust survivors is that, generally, they have never overcome their feelings enough to get on with their normal lives.⁷ Those feelings include loss, fear, anger, confusion, and shame.

In the Jewish community, when one person dies, those who cared for him or her immerse themselves in mourning and get support. But how does one, a survivor, mourn the loss of an entire community? How does one, a survivor, mourn not only loved ones, but the loss of home, business, and identity? For Holocaust survivors there was too much to mourn, and nobody to help the survivors mourn.⁸

No mental help professionals were available for the survivors right after the Holocaust to help express their feelings, cope and get back to normal lives.⁹

Some survivors, depending of their outlook, were able to cope using various survival mechanism. An Auschwitz survivor was unaware of the

crematorium because she somehow managed to block out the smells and missing people.¹⁰

Some survivors wished to talk about what happened to them, yet found that nobody wanted to listen. Many suffered what is now called traumatic stress disorder, a condition that includes flashbacks, nightmares, emotional detachment, and withdrawal from normal activities. Now in their 60's, 70's, and 80's, many survivors are now depressed, anxious, and withdrawn and have physical problems because of what bottled up inside them. They cannot enjoy what they are doing because they are always worrying about what might happen. The pain paralyzes them from taking risk, going out, traveling.¹¹

The unresolved feelings of survivors have been transferred in many cases in their families. Their children had to replace all those people and things that were lost, but that was a burden. This led a lot of survivors to be disappointed in their children and led their children to feel inadequate.¹² A bright spot is that although the survivors and their children often have difficult relationships, many survivors seem to have wonderful relationships with their grandchildren. They do not have the same expectations of their grandchildren as of their children, nor are the survivors as hard on the third generation.¹³

Will the pain of the survivors ever go away? Some believe that the pain will never go away and the past will never disappear and the losses will always be there. But even now, mourning would help Holocaust survivors... Talking about their experiences and feelings can still be beneficial.¹⁴

Children
of Survivors

Studies have shown that children of survivors, expected to be a drain on society, have not been so. Instead, every controlled study has shown that they have no more, no fewer, problems than anyone else. Many children of survivors grew up without grandparents, aunts and uncles, first cousins, but they have a strong sense of family and are concerned about not being the last one of the family tree. Being children of survivors flavors their lives.¹⁵ Sometimes a child of Holocaust survivor is an only child growing up in a sad household because other children of the family died in the Holocaust.

"Children of survivors, always knew what people could do to each other," is an observation of a child of Holocaust survivors. "We never had the notion that the world was a good place... I don't remember finding it out. I always knew."¹⁶

How Can Survivors Mourn their Immediate Losses in the Holocaust?

Many Holocaust survivors struggle with this dilemma. How to link themselves to the anniversary of the deaths in their families? To go to the synagogue, to say the memorial prayer, to study a chapter in a Holy Book, and in the presence of the living community of Israel, proclaim the holiness of God as well as his greatness.

In the Legends of Our Time, Elie Wiesel, describes the trauma of mourning:¹⁷

This is undoubtedly what I would do had my father died of old age, of sickness, or even of despair. But such is not the case. His death did not even belong to him. I do not know to what cause to

attribute it, in what book to describe it. No link between it and life he had led. His death, lost among all the rest, had nothing to do with the person he had been. It could just as easily have brushed him in passing and spared him. It took him inadvertently, absent-mindedly. By mistake. Without knowing that it was he ; he was robbed of his death.

Stretched out a plank of wood amid a multitude of blood-covered corpses, fear frozen in his eyes, a mask of suffering on the bearded, stricken mask that was his face, my father gave back his soul at Buchenwald. A soul useless in that place, and one he seemed to want to give back. But, he gave it up, not to the God of his fathers, but rather to the impostor, cruel and insatiable, to the enemy God. They had killed his God, they had exchanged him for another. How, then, could I enter the sanctuary of the synagogue [to mourn him] and loose myself in the ritual without lying to myself, without lying to him? How could I act or think like everyone else, pretend that the death of my father holds a meaning calling for grief and indignation ?

Perhaps, after all, I should go to the synagogue to praise the God of dead children, if only to provoke him by my own submission.

Tomorrow is the anniversary of the death of my father and I am seeking a new law that prescribes for me what vows to make and no longer to make, what words to say and no longer to say....

Many years have passed since I saw my father die. I have grown up and the candles I light several times a year in memory of departed members of my family have become more and more numerous. I should have acquired the habit, but I cannot. ...At each memorial ...I am overcome by desolation and futility ; I still do not know how to commemorate the death of my father, a death which took him by mistake...All things considered, I think ...I shall go to the synagogue after all. I will light the candles, I will say *Kaddish*(Memorial Prayer), and it will be for me a further proof of my impotence.

To Share the Legacy

Some Holocaust survivors want to share their memories with their children and grandchildren and to teach them, to leave them a legacy . In 1970, Alexander Donat wrote to his grandson :

My dear grandson, my son's firstborn:

Your father, and my son, was exactly at your age on that spring of 1945 when returning from a long journey through Hitler's night via the Warsaw ghetto, Maidanek, Dachau, Ravensbruck, Natzweiler, Auschwitz, we found him emaciated and covered with sores, but miraculously alive, in a Catholic orphanage near Warsaw... You will have by now already read my book The Holocaust Kingdom in which our family saga is told in detail, and you will know that this book also tells your story, because if not for its " happy ending " you wouldn't be here... In April, 1943 we handed our only son, Wlodek, to our Christian friend over the Warsaw ghetto wall. This was the only way we could hope to save his life. He was then five years and four months old...

Should I describe our last night ? Could I ? In the morning Maria (a Christian friend) took Wlodek's hand and walked briskly away. His mother did not shed a tear, this was the time of the assassin and the time of the hero. It was April 5, 1943, two weeks before the end of the ghetto. We gave away our son, for agony and for survival...

We survived, against hope and against the rules. It was an incredible miracle of survival. We left behind a graveyard of our people. And your father Wlodek, now William, at present thirty-two years old, is father of three children, of whom you are the first born. You are now seven years old, exactly the age your father was when we found him at the end of the war.

You may ask : Aren't twenty-five years sufficient to dull the

pain? Why not forget the past and enjoy life now? The answer is very simple: Those things are unforgettable. The scars can never be erased. There is no escape from the past except into the future. The guilt of having survived would be unbearable were it not for the mission to convey a message.

The most dreadful aspect of the Holocaust was that it turned what we regarded as impossible into a commonplace... Nobody can delude himself any longer that 'it cannot happen here.' It can happen here and any place, now and at any time, against Jews, Biafrans, Vietnamese, Russians, or Americans...

Had I considered our Holocaust a tragic but closed episode, I would have recommended that it be consigned to oblivion, as one of the many cyclical catastrophes in our history. But it is my firm conviction that the Holocaust was the beginning of an era, not its end... an era of turmoil and upheaval, of irrationality, of madness, an era of Auschwitz. We are now in the 29th year of this era, and it may last for centuries if the Bomb will let mankind to live that long. A new apocalyptic calendar may well start with a new Genesis; 'In the Beginning there was Auschwitz...'

In a world haunted by the memory of six million unvindicated victims behind us, and a cataclysmic perspective of an atomic doom ahead, with youth devoid of any ideal worth living for and wallowing in satiated sterility of our affluent futility, what legacy do we leave you? Can I offer you soothing belief in a good God watching and protecting us? I cannot even tell you that crime doesn't pay for it does. I am ashamed of the world of our generation is leaving to you. I cannot assure you that there will be no more Anne Franks, as her father wishfully thinks. I cannot assure you that Auschwitz's chimneys will never smoke again.

What then can I say to you? Only that I love you. You are my promised immortality.

A Child of Holocaust

Survivors Mourns

On the holiest evening of the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) a child of Holocaust survivors mourns in Bergen-Belsen:19

Kol Nidre in Bergen -Belsen

*Twice murdered shadows
rising slowly
out of the deserted
almost forgotten
massgraves
walking naked
through smoke
no longer breathable air
Death fog
in the stone covered silence
of mankind's forever frozen
ashes
nameless
faceless
holier than God
unprayed to*

An Ethical Will

from the Ashes

of the Holocaust...

The following Ethical will was found by a survivor among the ashes of the Holocaust in 1985 :20

Dear Friend,

You do not know me but you heard a lot about me. I do not exist in your world any longer because I did not survive the Holocaust but I am glad you did.

40 years ago I saw your coming out from the death camps

broken down, sick- you could hardly walk. I prayed to G-d for your recovery. When I saw your wounds heal, your getting stronger every day, I was so happy for you and I admired your courage when you picked up your family and relatives and every time you found one I rejoiced with you. And when you decided to leave the scene of these horrible memories and go away far to a new world and a start a new life I wished you well.

And here in a free country among good and decent people you worked hard, you went into business and did well. I was happy with your success.

At all your *simchot*(joys and celebrations), bar mitzvot and weddings, I cried with cries of joy like a mother at her daughter's wedding. You gave your children the best education and wise guidance so some day they can take over the sacred legacy and carry on the tradition of our people.

But I must ask you to do something for me. I cannot rest in peace until I have a grave. Not a real one but a symbolic one that you must put up in all the corners of the world. After all you promised that you never shall forget me and you will not let the world forget it either. On my headstone there must be a clear message to the world that I was an innocent victim of human bestiality, hate and bigotry ; that I was murdered for one reason only because I was born a Jew and wanted to remain a Jew. You owe me that much and I do not ask for anything else. This should have been done a long time ago but you were busy with other things so I forgive you. But I shall not wait any longer.

Should you for some reason forsake me, no matter how much it would hurt me, I would still watch over you as long as you live. And again I would forgive you, I even would pray to G-d for the forgiveness but would you be able to forgive yourself?

One of the Six Million Jews
who perished in the Holocaust

Marginal Thoughts
on Hope and Abyss

Many survivors are painfully searching for hope after a tragedy. Remembering the disaster that struck unexpectedly, they recall the feeling that kept some alive and then helped the remarkable adjustment to normality. This hope is recognized as part of the mystery of suffering that never could be fully understood.

The Holocaust, the great human tragedy, took place only a few decades ago. Many young men, who survived, remained lonely survivors forever. On equal terms with the victors, as well as those defeated, many dared to start a new existence in a ruthless struggle for a share in life. But the old dreams for the future were never resurrected. All hopes were lost somewhere in the abyss of the terrible years.²¹

These young people "licked" their internal wounds. What others enjoyed as hope, they recognized as a reaction of "build" in certain system of instincts, that irrespective of man's will dictated automatically to go on living. They stopped being excited about foolish nebulous mirages, that invariably end, without harm to anyone, in the terminal embrace of the Father Saturn.²² So they never could find escape in this mystical hope. They remained with that almost palpable omnipotent instinct, that held their existence in constant check and helped to adjust to the outside conditions with comforting immediate gratifications.²³

Unfortunately there are numerous incidents when those self-preserving systems broke with tragic results. It is enough to recall the case of the renowned author Primo Levi, who could not face the world any more.

A young survivors writes: "Only, only... I have to admit.. very deep inside flickers certain envy, that there are some still capable of entertaining enthralling hope in this 'wonderful,' 'just' world we live in."...²⁴

The Need to Survive
and Bear Witness

At the opening of her exhibition, " They Didn't Live to See ..." in 1991 at the Rockland Center for Holocaust Studies, Spring Valley, N. Y the artist, Dr. Luba K. Gurdus, a Holocaust survivor, delivered a speech. The following are excerpts from that remarkable and important speech :²⁵

During the Holocaust ordeal, which for Polish Jews lasted almost six years, I felt an impelling responsibility to survive which intensified as the war continued and the chance for survival decreased. Nevertheless, I never considered giving up and desperately held on to the faint hope of pulling through to transmit my experience and to translate my visual and emotional impressions into images which will reveal to the mute and seemingly paralysed world the harrowing circumstances of the Jewish plight.

During the process I was sustained by an overwhelming urge to show the silent world the consecutive stages of our victimization causing unbearable suffering but also surfacing Jewish restraint and endurance stemming from profound faith in justice and in God.

The Second World War was difficult for everybody caught up in the whirlwind. But as the world realizes now, it was intolerable for Jews, singled out for gradual extinction. This became more and more apparent with the imposed decrees and ordinances, suggesting a scheme, concealed by veil of secrecy, perfidy, and misleading lies introducing confusion and suspense.

To me , this cunning, treachery and deceit had a familiar ring. Studying in Berlin, in the early 1930's, I read the German press, witnessed Hitler's rise to power, and heard his inflammatory speeches. These were aimed primarily at the young to make

them susceptible to his message of vengeance against those responsible for the Versailles Treaty and against Jews, held accountable for Germany's economic crisis. With Hitler's popularity, Mein Kampf, filled with anti-Semitic venom and disdain for religion and morality, became Germany's Bible and made life very difficult. I headed home, to Poland, carrying gloomy warnings about Hitler's propaganda inciting the nation to enmity and prejudice against Jews. The only one who took my worries seriously and shared my concerns was my future husband, educated in Frankfurt, Germany....

...
In 1949 I had my first exhibit in the United States. In ensuing years I discovered that my effort was not isolated. Jewish artists in ghettos, camps and in hiding, barely coping with their existence, left records of their confinement and victimization. Their subject matter confirms the value of creative art as valid form of documentation and its potential to keep the artist's soul from dying and supplying both the subject and the artist with a precious incentive for survival.

During my confinement in the Majdanek Concentration Camp I kept a diary which I eventually translated into English. Using both verbal and visual means, I hoped to reach a larger public and make my accounts more accessible to the young. Educators increasingly realize that the Holocaust, a unique Jewish experience, has great universal implications and its historical and moral message is of great importance. Holocaust curricula indicate that the time is ripe to translate this message into moral ethical conscience, more moral responsibility and more sensitivity to injustice in our own society and around the globe...

Holocaust education is not limited to the warnings of the past. It holds a vital message for our time and a promise to sensitize the world to the dangers of unanswered violence and genocide. Its study will explain to the young and the old the intrinsic need to guard human rights in a free and just society which respects the principles of liberty, morality and civic responsibility within its own boundaries and in the world.

"We Bow in Sorrow..."

Chancellor Helmut Kohl

In connection with the Bitburg visit, Chancellor Helmut Kohl delivered this speech at the former concentration camp in Bergen-Belsen on May 5, 1985:26

Mr. President [Reagan]:

You have come here to pay homage to the victims of National Socialist tyranny. Bergen-Belsen was a place of unimaginable atrocities. It was only of the many sites testifying to a demonic will to destroy.

At a ceremony here two weeks ago, I, in my capacity as chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, professed our historic responsibility.

You, Mr. President, represent a country which played a decisive part in liberating Europe and ultimately the Germans, too, from Hitler's tyranny. We Germans reverently commemorate the soldiers of your nation who lost their lives in that act of liberation.

We bow in sorrow before the victims of murder and genocide.

The supreme goal of our political efforts is to render impossible any repetition of that systematic destruction of human life and dignity. With their partners and friends, the Americans and Germans therefore stand together as allies in the community of shared values and in the defense alliance in order to safeguard man's absolute and inviolable dignity in conditions of freedom and peace.

"Never Again..."

Pledge from

President Reagan

President Ronald Reagan's delivered the following speech at the former concentration in Bergen-Belsen on May 5, 1985:27

This painful walk into the past has done much more than remind us of the war that consumed the European continent. What we have seen makes unforgettably clear that no one of the rest of us can fully understand the enormity of the feelings carried by the victims of these camps.

The survivors carry a memory beyond anything we can comprehend. The awful evil started by one man- an evil that victimized all the world with its destruction - was uniquely destructive to the millions forced into the grim abyss of these camps.

Here lies people- Jews- whose death was inflicted for no reason other than their very existence. Their pain was borne only because of who they were and because of the God in their prayers. Alongside them lie many Christians- Catholics and Protestants.

For year after year, until that man and his evil were destroyed, hell yawned forth its awful contents. People were brought here for no other purpose but to suffer and die. To go unfed when hungry- and left to have misery consume them when all there was around them was misery.

I am sure we all share similar thoughts first. And that is ; what of the youngsters who died at this dark Stalag? All was gone for them- forever. Not to feel again the warmth of life's sunshine and promise, not the laughter and splendid ache of growing up, nor the consoling embrace of a family. Try to think of being young and never having a day without searing emotional and physical pain- desolate, unrelieved pain.

Today, we have been grimly reminded why the commandant of this camp was named, ' The Beast of Belsen.' Above all, we are struck by the horrors of it all- the monstrous, incomprehensible horror. That is what we have seen- but it what we can never understand as the victims did. Nor with all our compassion can

we feel what the survivors feel to this day and what they will feel as long as they live.

What we have felt and are expressing with words cannot convey the suffering that they endured. That is why history will forever brand what happened as the Holocaust.

Here, death ruled, But we have learned something, as well. Because of what happened, we found that death cannot rule forever. And that is why we are here today.

We are here because humanity refuses to accept that freedom or the spirit of man can ever be extinguished. We are here to commemorate that life triumphed over the tragedy and the death of the Holocaust- overcame the suffering, the sickness, the testing, and, yes, the gassings.

We are here today to confirm that the horror cannot outlast the hope- and that even from the worst of all things, the best may come forth. Therefore, even out of this overwhelming sadness, there must be some purpose. And there is. It come to us, through the transforming love of God.

We learn from the Talmud that, 'it was only through suffering that the children of Israel obtained three priceless and coveted gifts ; the Torah, the land of Israel, and the World To Come.' Yes out of this sickness-as crushing and cruel as it was- there was hope for the world as well as for the World To Come. Out of the ashes-hope, From all pain- promise.

So much this is symbolized today by the fact that most of the leadership of free Germany is represented here today. Chancellor Kohl, you and your countrymen have made real the renewal that had to happen. Your nation and the German people have been strong and resolute in your willingness to confront and condemn the acts of a hated regime in the past. This reflects the courage of your people and their devotion to freedom and justice since the war. Think how far we have come from that time when despair made these tragic victims wonder if anything could survive.

Surely we can understand that, when we see what is around us- all these children of God, under bleak and lifeless mounds, the plainness of which does not even hint at the unspeakable acts that created them. Here they lie. Never to hope. Never to pray. Never to love. Never to kneel Never to laugh. Never to cry.

And too many of them knew that this was their fate. But that was not the end. Through it all was their faith and a spirit that moved their faith.

Nothing illustrate this better than the story of a young girl who died here at Bergen-Belsen. For more than two years, Anne Frank and her family had hidden from the Nazis in a confined annex in Holland, where she kept a remarkably profound diary. Betrayed by an informant, Anne and her family were sent by freight car to Auschwitz and finally here to Bergen-Belsen.

Just three weeks before her capture, young Anne wrote these words; ' It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the sufferings of millions, and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty, to, will end, and that peace and tranquility will return again. '

Eight months later, this sparkling young life ended at Bergen-Belsen. Somewhere here lies Anne Frank. Everywhere here are memories- pulling us, touching us, making us understand that they can never be erased. Such memories take us where God intended his children to go- toward learning, toward healing, and , above all, toward redemption. They beckon us through the endless stretch of our heart to the knowing commitment that the life of each individual can change the world and make it better.

We are all witnesses. We share the glistening hope that rests in

every human soul. Hope leads us- if we are prepared to trust it- toward what our President Lincoln called, ' the better angels of our nature.' And then, rising above all this cruelty- out of this tragic and nightmarish time- beyond the anguish, the pain, and the suffering and for all time, we can and must pledge...never again.

Thoughts of Existence after the Holocaust

After the experience of the Holocaust, some survivors stop wondering how it was possible for a whole nation to design and then execute a program of genocide of another people of such proportions as the so-called " Final Solution ", that it was accomplished with the almost complete indifference of the whole civilized world.

Some survivors ask questions : " Could anybody detect a purpose in aimless dehumanization of the victims, before sending them into the gas chambers ? How can one explain the vicious massacres of innocent infants and naive children, with a sadistic bestiality never before recorded in history?" ²⁸ Could the blame be at all on those wicked instincts dormant under a very thin layer of culture ?

Many survivors feel that today, almost two generations after the Holocaust and the unforgettable war, the concepts so beautifully preached around them, are being persistently violated. Ethic, morality remain but empty shells, while religion inspire many, and others are intoxicated with those seemingly forgotten ideologies.

With resignation many survivors recognize that they are part of the animal kingdom occupying the position of the Homo sapiens- or may better Homo erectus. ²⁹

Finally the survivors resign themselves that this all end irrevocably in the meaningless embrace of death.³⁰

' I Will Remember '

A Pledge by a

Survivor's Grandson

Most Holocaust survivors are of advanced age. They are the last generation of this great human tragedy. The number is getting smaller every day. There is a frightening thought in their mind: they will be forgotten; what will happen when they are gone, who will remember them?

With the death of survivors in their midst, they mourn not only the death of an individual; they mourn because another survivor had died. With the death of survivors, they also take with them the memory of the Holocaust. Every day another dies, and every day the memory of the Holocaust fades a little more.

And then the tormenting questions: Who will remember? Who will make sure that their children, their wife, their families will remember? Who will make sure that the atrocities committed will never happen again and the Holocaust will not be forgotten?

A survivor's grandson attended with his family a burial of his great-uncle, a survivor of the Holocaust. The funeral was also attended by the survivors of Radom, the Polish village from which the family came. He made the following pledge to his grandmother and all survivors:³¹

I will remember. And I will tell everyone the stories you told me. No one will forget the Holocaust.

I am the third generation in the family of Holocaust survivors. In the next ten years, most of the people at that cemetery [where the burial took place] will pass away. When they die, a burden falls upon my shoulders. It is my responsibility, now and forever, to remember. If society is allowed to forget the atrocities committed by Hitler and the Nazis, then my family, the Radomers, and all other victims of the Holocaust, died for nothing. Those who survived struggled in the camps for many years, living through hell. If those who died are forgotten, then their survival means nothing. It would be the same if they had willingly walked into the ovens and gas chambers. As a grandchild, a Jew, and a human being, I must never forget.

Some survivors never speak of the horror they experienced. I can imagine the pain they must feel, so I don't blame them for their silence. But then their story is never told. My grandmother is a 'graduate' of Auschwitz. She wears her 'diploma' on her arm. Everytime I see her, she tells me about her experiences in the war. She tells me about my family I never knew and places that I have never seen. She tells me about Radom before the war, the ghetto, and Auschwitz. The telling of her story is inevitable, as are the tears that flow afterwards. My grandmother relieves the horror of her past, over and over again, so her story can be told.

Her pain is most obvious when speaking about her mother, my great-grandmother. She told me a story which I will never forget. My grandmother worked in a factory making ammunition for the Germans. She was separated from other Jews in Radom, and she saw her family infrequently. One day my grandmother was told that her family was being relocated the next day, so she rushed home for the last time. Her mother told her that they were being taken to their deaths and they would never see each other again. She gave my grandmother a letter, in which she told her to survive. She said she knew that my grandmother was the strongest, and that she would live. She said that she must tell the world what happened. She must never give up.

My grandmother carried this letter as her only possession until she was taken to Auschwitz. In the ghetto, where the diseased

and dead lay out in the street, my grandmother carried this letter. In the cattle cars where the people piled high amongst the dead, where the people lay in their own excrement, where mothers held their dead babies to their hearts, and where the children cried out in hunger, my grandmother carried this letter. When she arrived at Auschwitz with her cousin and stood there before Joseph Mengele, who directed her to the left and to survival, while he directed her cousin to the right and to death, my grandmother carried this letter. She carried this letter into the barracks where she was told she must give up all her possessions or be killed. Her entire body screamed out, she could not give up this letter, but then she remembered her mother's words. Words which were now so covered in dirt and death as to make them illegible, words which my grandmother would never forget. 'You must survive.' And my grandmother gave up her letter.

I am often asked about the Holocaust and I speak openly and willingly about that time, and the role my family played. I tell the stories my grandmother tells me, as I know she wants me to. Every time I speak about my grandmother and the Holocaust, I feel I have accomplished something. I feel that the monument [for Radom] in that cemetery in Long Island means something. ..As long as I keep telling the stories, my family, the rest of the Radomers, and the Holocaust will never be forgotten. Who will remember ? I will remember.

The Legacy of the Holocaust Passes from Parents to Children

Some children of Holocaust survivors have special relationship with their parents and their family. Here is an expression of that special relationship by a child of Holocaust survivors delivered at The N.Y. Commemoration of the Liquidation of Cracow Ghetto, March 8, 1992: 32

We commemorate our parents and grandparents, our dear loved ones, our forebearers who perished in a time of cruel inhumanity... We honor and keep the memory of our parents and grandparents by experiencing and continuing their essential qualities that we have received from them, every day of our lives.

...Recently I took a trip with my father to Israel. ...Throughout our week together, I thanked God for this special time that we shared. I thought back to other special times we had together. During those days, I became increasingly aware of a terrible and unknown pain that my father suffered. As I appreciated how lucky I was, at the age of forty-two, to be spending time with my seventy-year-old father, I thought of what it would be like to be seventy myself and take such a trip with my son. I also realized that my father could not have taken such a trip with his father. He could share his experiences as a father, but never as a son. I felt the tragedy of this.

... Those of us who are blessed with many years with our parents, had the time to develop, mold and cherish that essential quality that we, as children, receive. We experienced that essence of our parents in many different settings, with God's blessing, over many years.

We must ask : What is so special about the Holocaust ? All children and parents have the experience of passing the baton. Many of us know of people who were deprived of many years with their parents. I have friends whose parents were orphaned at an early age having nothing to do with the Holocaust. But the Holocaust experience is different.

... The survivors, our parents, entered the cave [the Holocaust, ghettos, camps, atrocities] together with their parents. There must have been a unique bonding between our parents and their parents. Depending on each story, the bonding may have been over a long time or it may have taken place in an instant... at a train station, a quick glance, a touch.

The uniqueness of the Holocaust experience is that parents and

children entered the cave together. In the cave, the baton passed from parent to child. In the cave, the essence of the parents was revealed to the children.

My material grandmother revealed the essence to my mother. I have no doubt that the baton was passed to my mother on August 22, 1944. [Here are my mother's words]: 'I came to Auschwitz on August 22, 1944. I came with my mother, my brother, my father, my aunt and uncle, and my cousin. A neighbor of ours was with us in the same wagon. He had a four-year-old child with him; he had lost his wife in the ghetto.

We got off the train in Auschwitz and the Germans separated the men right away. The women and children were on one side and the men on the other. When they separated the men, this little girl, the neighbor's child, was left alone. My mother (she was a saint) walked over to neighbor and said 'Don't worry. I will take care of the child.' She took this child by the hand and she kept her, wouldn't let go of her. The child was alone and my mother wouldn't let the child stand alone.

Everything happened very rapidly. When Mengele came, he started this segregation. My aunt was with her little boy in the front and my mother with this little girl by her hand and my brother, and I was the last one. My aunt and her little boy he motioned to the left, and when he asked my mother if this was her child and she nodded yes, he sent her to the left. My brother being only twelve at that time, he sent to the left, and me he motioned to the right.

I realized my mother was on the other side and I wanted to run to my mother, I wanted to be with her. A Jewish woman who worked there caught me in the middle and said, in Polish, 'Don't you dare move from here!' Because she knew that if I went on the other side I would go to the gas chamber. And she wouldn't let me move. I stood there with that woman holding me and she wouldn't let me move.

This was the last time I saw my mother. She went with the neighbor's child. So when we talk about heroes, this was a hero: 'A woman who would not let a four-year-old child go by

herself.'

My mother was deprived of her birthright; Many long years with her mother. But in those moments on August 22, 1944, she was instilled with the essence that would be nurtured and grow within her. She did not know it then, but on that day, when she was barely 15 years old, her mother instilled in her the qualities that my mother has drawn on to be a wife, mother and grandmother.

Every day, my mother, my parents, our parents, all of us commemorate those who perished. As parents to our children, we pass he baton that was given to us.

Where Shall I Put
the Flowers, My Son?

How can the loss of a dear one in the Holocaust be expressed ? A survivor, a mother laments in her poem:33

You were my first born, with a lively cry.
I nourished and raised you with all my love and
tenderness ; and saw you grown to handsome
teens, with a mind that even dazzled the
learned rabbis.
Then " Bloody Thursday" came to Lodz and they
marched us into the Ghetto on a freezing,
snowy night.
On that march they grabbed you from the ranks
of huddled, bewildered Jews, walking for miles
into the merciless night.
Some said they made young boys jump to their
death from tall buildings. I looked everywhere.
Others said you were sent to concentration camps.
I looked there too.
I went to Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau and
other camps.

I looked at many memorials where massacres
took place and could not find your grave.
I wanted to put some flowers on your grave.
But I don't know where.
Please tell me where shall I put the flowers,
my son ?
Each year I raise fresh flowers for you.
Each year I look for your grave.
I only ask a small favor from life : to know where
to put the flowers , my son.
And now time is running out.
My eyes have sunk into empty wells.
My weary feet can't carry me anymore.
When I am gone, who will grow fresh flowers ;
and look where to put them my son ?

Lisa Choroszcz
Washington, D.C.

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CHAPTER 14

To Remember and To Teach

Holocaust education has powerful purpose stated Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut at a center for Holocaust studies in 1990:¹

During my career in the Senate, we have commemorated several important anniversaries of the Holocaust and its aftermath... Were we relating these observance to our present and future, so that the memory of the Holocaust can teach us?

My father, Thomas Dodd, certainly thought so. He had just been executive trial counsel to our chief prosecutor at Nuremberg, Robert Jackson. Later, my father said of his experience at Nuremberg that he had been present at 'an autopsy of history's most horrible catalogue of human crime.'...

Tom Dodd did not learn the lesson himself but insisted on passing it on to his children... his children knew more about the Holocaust than their Jewish friends. These were by no means recitals of dry facts. They were vivid lessons in political science, sociology, constitutional law, and psychology.

The first thing students of the Holocaust understand is that the recall of historic events is just the beginning of Holocaust education, and probably not the most important part. The studies start with the past, but their core, their substance, their essence is what they tell us about the present and future.

What is the purpose of Holocaust education?... my answer from the perspective of a United States Senator who is dedicated to the development of international law and human rights [is]... It is difficult to confront the horrors of the Holocaust, and in the United States the simplest response is to close one's eyes, to say that it was not an American phenomenon. The mind instinctly flees from confronting barbarism. Indeed, when the Holocaust does find its place in the American curriculum, it is usually a

world history course. American history courses that discuss World War II cover this nation's military role; other courses do not mention the Holocaust at all.

But because, the Holocaust was - and we hope and pray will remain - a unique event in human history, the lessons it teaches are also unique. Because Nazi ideology engulfed every aspect of a society, the lessons are applicable to a range of academic subjects.

... If no one passes on the lessons of the Holocaust, people will avoid considering the atrocities of the Nazis. If students are not taught about the Holocaust, it will be forgotten...

If the Holocaust resulted in the destruction of European Jewry, why should non-Jewish American feel compelled to study it?

... We are not that far removed from the Holocaust. While the victims were Jews, the murderers were not... The Holocaust can be universalized... by stressing who those responsible for it were. It was a nation not substantially different from our own who was responsible - with an informed citizenry, civilized, and well educated. But it was educated to distrust, disdain, and eventually dehumanize one segment of its population. The universality of the Holocaust is the fearsome potential of its repetition.

In the Holocaust, it was not merely the worst nightmare of the Jews that materialized, but rather the worst of humankind...

The Holocaust would not have been possible had other nations not abdicated their responsibility to protect freedom...

We can maintain our vigilance only if we educate young Americans on the Holocaust. We must never forget that Hitler came to power in a democratic contest, that a multiparty system is not by itself insurance against the ascendance of a demagogue, and that it is necessary in a pluralistic society to walk a fine line between intolerance of minority viewpoints and endorsement of anti-democratic ones...

... Everytime an oppressed person anywhere in the world seeks protection in the institution of human rights, every time someone bases an argument on the existence of a universally binding body of human rights law, that individual of whatever color, creed, or nationality owes a debt to the memory of the Holocaust...

This, for me, is the most substantial, most universal, most transcendent meaning of Holocaust education, and education for the whole of humankind.

How to Keep the Memory of the Holocaust Alive ?

Teachers and educators are confronted with the challenge of teaching the Holocaust in their schools and campuses.

One approach is expressed by a teacher the following way :

As well as teaching social study skills, a teacher has the obligation of teaching moral values. The classroom teacher should ' Keep the Memory of the Holocaust Alive' by presenting to What, Why, How, and Who of the Holocaust.

A technique I have been using for decades is to utilize newspaper and magazine articles that show what happened to the Jews and other ethnic groups like the Polish people, Russians, Czechoslovakians, Catholics, Gypsies, and the like.

.. One can either make a class set to be used in class or produce enough for all students. The material can be used for classwork and as source material for homework... If the newspaper articles had several pages about the Holocaust I cut up the large article. Sometimes, a tour of important Wallenberg sites...

Some of my best stories are 'A Catholic Heroine of the Holocaust,' 'Valiant Priest,' two pages from the book on the

television show ' Holocaust ' and recently from the Jewish Week of New York a story of a former Black G.I. liberator who goes around the country speaking about his experiences in 1945.

I try to get students to understand why they must care about the Holocaust. I often pass a sheet of paper around the room and have students write their nation of origin- without putting their names down so as not to embarrass any student.. I put my origins, Rumanian and Russian , first. In schools with dozens of nationalities and languages or dialects, the students get the idea that no one group is dominant, so we could respect each other .

A teacher could use filmstrips or filmstrips and a cassette or colored slides or a V.C.R. with a commercial tape on the Holocaust or show copies from T.V. One of the best Holocaust tapes is called ' Night and Fog', a French tape with English subtitles... Some shows , of course , are not for lower grades but a teacher can find a way to teach about the Holocaust and ' Keep the Memory Alive.'

This article shows how much improvement is needed in Holocaust education even among those who have the best intention. The Holocaust studies must also highlight the human dimensions and tragedy which is many schools is done by inviting a Holocaust survivor to talk to the students.

More than Numbers
the Holocaust is People

The effect of human dimensional approach to the Holocaust is powerfully expressed in essay of a student, Erica Marie Selimotic, at Ellenville(N.Y.) High School's

How can one paper possibly explain the vast knowledge I have learned from the Holocaust ? The struggles each man, woman and child went through and the extremes of prejudice and

cruelty they encountered is a lesson in itself. Yet, the Holocaust also teaches one the value of life, the courage needed to survive, and the horrid reality of prejudice and hatred.

When I began the Holocaust class in my high school I truly did not know what to expect. I imagine that there would be lessons dealing with Hitler's Final Solution, Nazism, and the Jewish ghettos. I also hoped to understand what made Adolf Hitler into the monster he was.

In January 1933 Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany. By September 1, 1939, he had already invaded Poland and began his Second Solution. Hitler's Final Solution began June 22, 1941 and lasted until the end of World War II. These are the dates lifted from a textbook or memorized from the teacher's lips. They cannot convey the feelings and emotions of the victims.

However, through my Holocaust class, instead of learning mere facts and figures I began to have a greater understanding of the actual people involved. The Holocaust killed and tortured over 11 million people, whether Jewish or not, yet this audacity also affected the lives of all 11 million families and loved ones, just as the victims affect the world today. As I sit in my 3rd period class each day, I slowly absorb the harsh realities of prejudice and the sweetness of hope for tomorrow.

Prejudice comes in many forms. Learning about the Holocaust helps to keep these prejudices from encompassing our lives. Throughout our days we often experience small doses of prejudice, yet do not know acknowledge its existence... However, by learning about the extreme examples of prejudice, like the Holocaust, society will be able to gain a better grasp of the groundwork of any form of prejudices and help to combat it before it further develops.

As I continue in my studies of the Holocaust, I feel I have come to an understanding about mankind. It seems there always be a 'bad' seed among us all. Our job is to sift through and find the seed so that it cannot contaminate any more people. For prejudice grows and thrives on ignorance and insecurity.

The Holocaust has taught me to look beyond the appearance of people and judge only their qualities as human beings. In learning about the Holocaust, many of these insecurities and much of the ignorance will be done away with. And, while I may never completely understand why Adolf Hitler became such a mad man, I am able to learn from this terrifying reign to hopefully help break the cycle of prejudices among all.

Creative Teacher

Can Stress

Literary Responses

There are some gifted teachers who are most innovative and creative in teaching about the Holocaust.⁴ One of them is Grace Caporino of Carmel (N.Y.) High School who received the 1991 New York State Louis Yavner Award for contributions teaching about Holocaust, as well as other violations of human rights.

Her story was featured in an article in the New York State Teacher.⁵

Mrs. Caporino calls on students to confront the implications of the Holocaust by analyzing the literary responses to the Holocaust, in memoirs and fiction written by survivors. Her philosophy is that "art reaches the soul in a way that data, facts, and sheer horror cannot."⁶

Because students cannot place the Holocaust with sophistication in the proper historical context, Mrs. Caporino steers them in a direction where they can understand the consequences of injustice and prejudice. In the words of Mrs. Caporino: "students see what happens when prejudice is unleashed. Then they realize, I hope, that the ethnic joke told in the classroom or the prejudicial views that lead to exclude certain groups are the beginning of an attitude then end of which is Auschwitz."⁷

What is the essence of Mrs. Caporino's teaching? It is told that" artist-survivor Valerie Furth visited the Carmel school and related her re-encounter with Auschwitz. Furth returned to the notorious camp, she told students, and had never been able to shake off the nightmares occasioned by that return.

One student accompanied Furth to her car and suddenly pulled two stones from his pocket. Said the student to the survivor, ' I carry these to keep my nightmares away, and I sleep with them at night. They work for me, but I want you to have them now. Put them under your pillow so you can sleep without nightmares.'"⁸

Holocaust Education

Gives Purpose to Students

Another type of student's reaction is expressed with deep emotions by Evana Rogers, of Groves High School in Detroit:⁹

I was thoroughly unaware. I consciously made the fateful decision to witness Auschwitz, yet I had no clue that I had made a decision to walk into the rest of my life, right then and there, at age 16. My life until March 17, 1990, has now become not only part of my past, but an entirely separate lifetime. Until I was given a purpose in life, a mission to fulfill, I was merely existing.

I awoke from my childhood slumber as I touched the gray stone of Treblinka. I rubbed and opened my eyes as I picked up the sandal of a young child lying in a pile of prisoners' shoes. I approached the threshold of what I was to become as I felt the crunch of ashes below my feet in a Majdanek crematoria run up my spine. The moment at which I became part of the soil of Auschwitz, I had been born.

With each passing moment in Poland, a 16-year-old girl was forced to let go of comfort. I could no longer play the role of an innocent child in this world. Living with my life would now require steadfast faith and undying purpose in order to make sense of the hell I saw unfold before me.

To make sense of the Holocaust is undeniably inconceivable. However, to make the conscious decision to attempt to see it the first step to becoming not only educated, but understanding and mature. To open your eyes but close your heart at the photographs of Auschwitz is understandable. To listen to the stories of survivors yet never make the attempt to hear is understandable. To memorize facts about the logistics of the Nazi war machine yet block out descriptions is acceptable. To avoid these questions in the first place, however, is not acceptable.

To live a responsible life, you have an obligation to learn. To call yourself educated means you've made the attempt to see with your eyes and understand with your mind. Emotions entail the feelings which come about as a result of education.

Education is the easy part, the foundation of everything you do with your abilities. Lack of education and emotions equals ignorance, leading to prejudice. Education alone equals intelligence. Education paired with the will to feel is maturity.

What you believe is your faith and feel in your heart is your purpose, what you stand for. I crossed the Polish border with the illusions one has before he has been presented with the material for education. I was naive, I was ignorant, I was a child; but more importantly, I was curious. It was slap in the face to be confronted with the concept that it would be up to me to decide if and how God exists, and if so, how could the Holocaust occurred? It was up to me to stand before a case of human bones; it was up to me to behold the beautiful golden braids tied into bows with shreds of striped uniforms. Yet so much more importantly, it was then up to me to answer the question, 'Why?' It could not have been up to me to find the will to ask questions.

I had sat through classes just weeks earlier, while I listened to journal entries, but I did not hear. I had walked through glass museums where I looked, but did not see. The information was made available to me. The choice was there for me. I made a personal decision to open my heart and reaffirm my faith. I had the opportunity to begin the road to becoming everything I could ever want to be.

Now here I am. I have full faith in God, and, ironically, I also have full faith in humankind. I would never have taken that first step had I not the opportunity to learn.

The Holocaust Valuable Lessons at High Cost

What can students learn from the Holocaust? An enlightening answer was given by Karen Fischer, a student at Riverwood High School in New Jersey: 10

The Holocaust was a very valuable lesson for all the world. The cost was very high in terms of the innocent lives that were destroyed by it. We must learn the lesson it taught- Now! We must never let it happen again. This musn't be allowed to diminish the power of the Holocaust's message in our time.

One fact we must realize that history repeats itself even if humanity is often unaware of this tendency. Many evils in this world have repeated themselves over the time in which civilization has existed. World War II itself is an example. We must all remember that this can happen again if we don't learn from our past mistakes. Even something such as the Holocaust can reappear unless we prevent it.

Another important aspect to be appreciated is that whether we are directed to do something or not, we are responsible for that action. The main defense of the Nazi war criminals was that

they had been ordered to torture and murder many Jews(it wasn't their choice), so, they said, the responsibility wasn't theirs. The result was that many of the suspected war criminals were, nevertheless, found guilty. This must be considered before we mindlessly follow a warped leader.

The third reason was society's attitude. The horrors of the Holocaust were able to extend as far as they did since society as a whole thought that these barbaric acts were a problem not because innocent people were being tortured and killed, but because it bothered society ! The stench and ashes from the furnaces bothered them only because they made their lives less comfortable ! People at large had lost their care and compassion for their fellow men and women. This caused people living in the areas surrounding the various camps to watch the proceedings with curiosity - but with little concern for or horror of the fact that so many innocent Jews were being killed right at their own backyards. The residents regretted only that it sometimes got in the way of their lives. Mankind must never again reach this intolerable level of indifference. The terror of the Holocaust may return and this time no one knows what form it may take.

There are several lessons to be learned from the years-long nightmare that was the Holocaust. We must always remember that responsibility for our own actions lies with us and no one else. History occasionally repeats itself, and we must not let the general indifference of the masses during World War II ever happen again. If we realize and accept the importance of these lessons and live with them in mind, the world will become a much better place. These critical teachings, however, had a very high price- millions of innocent lives were taken. So since it did happen, let's be sure we learn from the tragedy and not let another Holocaust have to remind us what we already should have learned.

Lessons from
the Holocaust
for Universities
and Intellectuals

The Nazi doctors and "scientists" performed the most gruesome medical "experiments" on concentration camp victims. These experiments raised frightening questions : How can medical scientists so lose perspective as to experiment on fellow human beings? How can a medical profession that was at the forefront in its time operate in such a moral vacuum ?

Gisela Konopka, a historian at the University of Minnesota, tries to answer these troublesome questions and also analyse the awesome lessons of the Holocaust for universities and intellectuals in general : 11

... The medical experiments done in the concentration camps were in no way scientific undertakings. They were sadistic, depersonalized attacks disguised as science. Almost all the medical so-called experiments, including those of freezing people to death, were done without the use of anesthetics. In no way would this make them more acceptable. This is only an additional indication that this was not a scientific undertaking. Also, why was there such an emphasis on the so-called scientific experiments related to genitalia? All theories of racial hatred include preoccupation with sex, implying that members of any so-called inferior race need to be feared because of their intent to rape the so-called beautiful superior race ! Early Nazi laws that forbade women under 45 years of age to serve in a Jewish household that included a male member, were based on this insulting nonsense. To the Nazis, those people were not persons. There were no "good intentions". The 'Volk' and social hygiene ideologies were screens and falsehoods. 'All for the Volk' was not ideology. It was a rationalization of sadistic impulses.

I remember that early in 1933, one young Nazi doctor inoculated one person after another, including myself, with the same needle without sterilizing it. In my presence someone mentioned the need for clean needles to him. He laughed and said, ' For those ? Who cares ! '

... What have we learned ? We have to always remember a very basic principle, that science in itself is valueless and so is

technology. In the use of both in a world inhabited by people, human ethics and values must enter.

..Science and technology do not equal humanity. This was Einstein's dilemma and he was very aware of it. We may disagree in application to individual cases and situations, but I think we can crystallize two basic values or measuring sticks that are absolute and should be used at any time. They are the importance of the dignity of each individual regardless of his/her origin, and so forth, and the responsibility of people for each other.

All over the world those values were expressed by many great religions and individuals.. The Judeo-Christian injunction says, ' Love thy neighbor like thyself.' The humanist postulates, ' All men are brothers.' 'The whole of humanity shall be a united people' (Ramakrishna, India's religious reformer). ' Wound no others. Do no one injury by thought or deed, utter no word to pain thy fellow creatures' (the Code of Manu-Hindu). ' Harm no living thing' (Buddhist). ' Never do others what you would not like them to do to you'(Confucius). ' 'The moral law is within you' (Kant).

The Holocaust has given us a stern warning. As a historian, I may add that there were other such warnings too. Let us not forget the lynching and torturing of slaves. Those have shown what it means when we forget basic human values. In each case, whatever we do we have to assess whether we are violating the principle of the value of each human being, and our responsibility for each other.

...No lynching or racist theories in the US excuse any torture under the Nazis. Nor does any tortures during the Holocaust excuse a single discrimination or racial slur in the US or anywhere else in the world.

...Regarding the responsibility of intellectuals, then and now : It shames me to think that members of a university would want to use bogus knowledge[data from Nazi experiments] gained under such human circumstances. To me, universities and a free press are the most important safeguards of a free society. If

they fall, we may loose to much. I know that they can be corrupted as they were in Germany. Not every one of the professors at the German universities agreed with the Nazis, but too many were silent. Those who worked actively with them and did the medical experiments were criminals with so-called clean hands, fine titles, and good employment...Unfortunately, sharp intellects have the capacity to find rationalism for atrocities. Solzhenitsyn wrote : 'What is the most precious thing in the world ? Not to participate in injustices. They are stronger than you. They have existed in the past and they will exist in the future. But let them not come about throug you."

Too easily one can be swayed by personal ambition and the comfort that surrounds people in university settings to let things just happen. Greed and arrogance can be used to hurt others. We need people with courage, with no arrogance because of their positions, their intelligence, their race, or whatever, to act according to a conscience. The Reverend Michael Scott, active in the fight against Apartheid in South Africa, said... 'If you believe in the dignity of men, you must uphold it whatever it is being disregarded.'

That is what we learn from the Holocaust.

Revisionists Spreading

Hate on Campuses

In spite of greater Holocaust awareness, not everyone learned the lessons of the Holocaust. Revisionism and denial of the Holocaust did not disappear.

In 1991 / 1992 Revisionists have taken their campaign to college campuses, with full page ads claiming that the Holocaust never happened. Sponsored by the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust, the ads claim the "myth of the Holocaust" was invented by Zionist organizations involved in disseminating anti-German hate propaganda after World War II.

Ads appeared in the form of a newspaper article and stated "Revisionists deny that the German state had a policy to exterminate the Jewish people... by putting them to death in gas chambers or killing them through abuse or neglect." The writer of the ad, Bradley Smith, director of the Committee for Open Debate, argues that the figure of six million Jewish deaths is a hoax and was invented by Zionist conspirators and Allied forces to justify "their own particular crimes against humanity" during the war.¹²

The ad made its debut in the Daily Northwestern, the student newspaper at Northwestern University, in Evanston, Ill. Other appearances included the Daily Michigan of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Duke University Chronicle, Durham, North Carolina. The ad also appeared at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. free of charge as a "guest commentary", but was accompanied by a group of refutations.

The comments of two Rutgers professors, Prof. David M. Oshinsky, professor of history, and Prof. Michael Curtis, professor of political science, which appeared in a New York Times op-ed article should be read at all universities: "The ad attempts to prey on student ignorance about the Holocaust. It insists, without evidence, that there were no mass killings of Jews and no 'execution gas chambers in any camp in Europe that was under German control.' It claims the so-called execution chambers were 'fumigation chambers,' used to 'delouse clothing...and prevent disease.' It is 'from the life-saving procedure', the ad says, 'that the myth of extermination gas chambers emerged.'" ¹³

While the professors agree that the principle of freedom of speech is a legitimate reason for printing the ad, they feel that this principle, if followed to its fullest, is fraught with danger: "If one group advertises that the Holocaust never happened, another can buy a space to insist that American

blacks were never enslaved. The stakes are high because college newspapers may soon be flooded with ads that present discredited assertions as if they were part of normal historical debate. If the Holocaust is not a fact, then nothing is a fact, and truth itself will be diminished."¹⁴

In many campus libraries the book of Arthur Butz "The Hoax of the Twentieth Century" and other books are available.

Ignorance About the Holocaust Widespread

Ignorance of the Holocaust is rampant among a significant portion of American adults and high-school students, according to a survey published in April, 1993.¹⁵

Sizable minorities of those questioned said they were open to believing the possibility that the Holocaust never happened at all. However, a majority of both adults and young believe the Holocaust is relevant today and that it is important for all Americans to know about and understand the Holocaust.

The survey, called "What Do Americans Know About the Holocaust?" was based on questionnaires filled out by 992 adults and 506 high-school students. The study underscored that a serious knowledge gap exists in both groups to basic knowledge about the Holocaust.

Thus, for each of four questions measuring basic knowledge of the Holocaust, from over one-thirds of American adults and majority of high-school students failed to answer correctly.

When asked in an open format, "As far as you know, what does the term 'Holocaust' refer to?" 39 percent of adults and 53 percent of high-school students either said they "don't know" or offered completely incorrect answers.

When asked, " From what you know or have heard, what were Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka?" 62 percent of adults and 48 percent of high-school students answered either they " don't know" or answered incorrectly.

Sixty percent of the adults and 53 percent of students agreed with the statement " The Holocaust makes clear the need for the State of Israel as a place of refuge for Jews in time of persecution."

When asked, " Approximately how many Jews were killed in the Holocaust?" 35 percent of adults and 28 percent of youths answered " 6 million"; 65 percent of adults and 71 percent of students either said they "don't know" or answered incorrectly.

The survey findings under-score the serious lack of knowledge that exists for disturbingly large numbers of both adults and youth in the United States with regard to basic knowledge about the Holocaust.

At the same time, however, a majority of Americans, both younger and older, do acknowledge the importance of knowing about the Holocaust. Providing such knowledge is clearly an urgent desideratum, since a significant majority of Americans, both adults and young, are open to the idea that the Holocaust never happened.

How Can the Desecration
of the Holocaust
be Tolerated !

How can desecration of the memory of the six million Jews and millions of others by revisionists be tolerated! Where is the heart of human beings who deny the massacre of 1, 500,000 Jewish children, babies, infants !

How can this great human tragedy be denied ! How can man again in our enlightened United States step backward into barbarism and darkness !

It takes a special kind of human being to be able to deny, to cut away from their own consciousness. That's how camp guards were able to do their work, too. How else could they close the door on the gas chambers and ovens in the morning and go home to the warmth of their own wives and children at the end of the day ?

The revisionists and those who deny the Holocaust are murdering the six million Jews, the 1,500,000 children again and again and are inflicting deep wounds in the heart of the survivors. Perhaps, that is their aim but his time they will not prevail. All the attempts at whitewashing those ghastly crimes will not succeed. The survivors, the eyewitnesses of those bloody events will never rest. They made their life work to remind the world of them lest it happen again. The survivors request from the world an answer to how the Holocaust could have happened in a presumably civilized world and demand an answer on how the world intends to prevent such a tragedy and calamity in the future. The blood of the six million, the martyrs, the children, the fathers, the mothers, the families, are crying out of their mass graves demanding action. The survivors will fight even one Nazi or revisionist as they did in Skokie in 1977 and with their fight will not only demand that the world remembers the Holocaust but that from the lessons learned from the Holocaust one day a better world will be created for all mankind.

In 1989 a project called " Unto Every Person There is a Name " started as part of the annual commemoration of the Holocaust.¹⁶ Names of victims are read on the steps of the Capitol in Washington, the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, the Isaiah Wall opposite the United Nations in Manhattan and in many communities around the nation.

Some of the names that were read in 1993, are :

" Ruth Lazar, age 15, from Lyon, France. Death place, Auschwitz."

" Kurt Lazar, age 13, from Lyon, France. Death place, Auschwitz."

" Francine Lazar., age 5, from Lyon,France. Death place, Auschwitz."

The public readings are especially important in light of the recent efforts to deny that the Holocaust took place.

To See , to Record,
to Remember,
to Learn...

"To see and record" ; this had been the self imposed task of the historian Emanuel Ringelblum and his 'Joy of Sabbath' circle in the Warsaw ghetto, from the ghetto's first day. It had been Simon Dubnov's, the great Jewish historian, last instruction as he was shot down in Riga in December 1941 at the age of eighty-one. In the concentration camps there had been a slogan, "I am the victim! I am the witness!"¹⁷

To survive and to give witness was a historic imperative. The Warsaw poet, Yitzhak Katzenelson, in his last days in Vittel, before being deported to Auschwitz and his death, also stressed to recall the acts of resistance : " Sing a hymn to the hero of the remote hamlet ! Sing loud his praise, see his radiant figure." ¹⁸

There was also a moral imperative; a survivor of the Theresienstadt ghetto and of Auschwitz, later recalled that throughout the ages " it had been the lot of the Jews to deliver mankind a warning." ¹⁹ This warning , seen so starkly in the years of the Holocaust, was a clear one: "that violence is in the end self-destructive, power futile, and the human spirit unconquerable." ²⁰

The story of the Holocaust can be retold but can convey only a fragment of this great human tragedy, of the Jewish suffering and courage, of those terrible years. With the Allied victory in 1945, the Holocaust became history, for many increasingly distant, remote, forgotten ; a chapter, reduced to a page, shortened to a paragraph in textbooks, relegated to a footnote in articles.

Yet the Holocaust must still remembered in each generation for what it was : an unprecedented explosion of evil over good.²¹

At Auschwitz, as a survivor, (a hometown friend of the author, now a rabbi in London), has written, the ethical code which was part of the tradition of individual Jews, and also part and parcel of the Judeo-Christian tradition, was "denied and reversed":²² "... It[The Holocaust] was a denial of God. It was a denial of man. It was the destruction of the world in miniature form."²³

To Fight Evil

In the face of so violent an upsurge of evil, the Jewish resistance that took place during the war years possessed a heroic dimension. Hardly a day passed without some act of defiance, as seen in those records which have survived ; records which are only a fragment of the whole story.

At every stage of the war, the Germans used insuperable deterrents: military superiority, a crushed and terrorized local population, sadistic helpers, and above all the threat and the reality of massive reprisals. Hundreds were shot for the resistance of a single person. In Lvov, on March 16, 1943, when a Jew killed a German policeman noted for his cruelty, the

Germans murdered twelve hundred Jews as a reprisal; a far higher reprisal ratio than used against the Czechs in Lidice in 1942, or against the French in Oradour in 1944.²⁴ Yet despite these terrible reprisals and savagery, Jewish resistance was never crushed in its entirety, even in the death camps.²⁵

In every ghetto, in every deportation train, in every labor camp, even in the death camps, the will to resist was strong, and took many forms; fighting with those few weapons that could be found, fighting with sticks and knives, individual acts of defiance and protest, the courage of obtaining food under the threat of death, the nobility of refusing to allow the Germans their final wish to gloat over panic and despair. Even passivity was a form of resistance. "Not to act," Emanuel Ringelblum wrote in the aftermath of one particularly savage reprisal, "not to lift a hand against the Germans, has become the quiet passive heroism of the common Jew."²⁶

To die with dignity was a form of resistance. To resist the dehumanizing, brutalized the force of evil, to refuse to be abased to the level of animals, to live through a torment, to outlive the tormentors, these too were resistance. Merely to give witness by one's own testimony was, in the end, to contribute to a moral victory. Simply to survive was a victory of the human spirit.²⁷

The Implications of the Holocaust

Remembering the Holocaust cannot prevent a recurrence, but it can serve as a core symbol in a new political and social discourse. The fate of the Jews has become a symbol for the fate of all mankind. The Holocaust may serve as a great plumb line against which to measure political behavior, to remind man of what humans are capable, and equally to serve as a way of

keeping crimes in their proper perspective.²⁸ Vietnam and Cambodia, Biafra and Bangladesh, Serbia and Sudan, are not the same as the Holocaust, but as a result of con-consciousness of the Holocaust, there is now a clearer language for saying in what way the evils of these atrocities and massacres consisted and in what way they did not.

The total powerlessness of the Jews during the Holocaust also points to the fate of all humanity in the face of nuclear war. It is now possible for governments to deliver the ovens of Auschwitz to all corners of the earth, to make a holocaust of all mankind.²⁹ Like the Jews of Nazi Europe, the people of the world will be utterly impotent in such a war, neither soldiers nor even innocent bystanders, but, again, like the Jews, intentional victims.

As a metaphor for a new politics of irrationality, the Holocaust contains a message of inescapable relevance for a nuclear world. For the first time in human history, governments are seeking to eradicate a whole people from the earth for reasons that has nothing to do with political realities. In a similar way, the idea of a nuclear war lacks the most elementary political rationality, for it would necessarily destroy everything it meant to save ; it would take genocide, invented in its most systematic form by the Nazis, to its global and suicidal conclusion.³⁰

The Jews as

Beacon to Nations

In the dialectic between power and vulnerability, the long history of the Jews may serve as beacon to the nations. From biblical times to present day, the Jews have wandered the terrains of uncertain power and powerlessness, never quite achieving the power necessary to guarantee long-term security, but equally avoiding, with a number of disastrous exceptions,

the abyss of absolute powerlessness.³¹ They developed the consummate political art of living with uncertainty and insecurity; their long survival owes much to this extraordinary achievement. Jews today must struggle to come to terms with history, to see both past and present through realistic lenses. The most relevant legacy is to remember not only how the Jews died, but also how they lived. This may convey a lesson for continued existence of all people.

In a century of shifting, elastic morality, the Holocaust stands out as something very close to firm. For a civilization that cannot agree on a standard of absolute good, Auschwitz asserts itself as an absolute evil. Perversely, it offers the foundation of a moral universe. It is an ethical base line, humanity's nadir.³²

Holocaust Education and Remembrance

Teaching of the Holocaust is a necessity and responsibility. Students need to learn about the Holocaust, the great human tragedy, to know what it means in today's society.

A growing group of educators are committed to making the Holocaust a part of each student's learning experience. Annually a National Holocaust Teachers Conference is held where teachers gather to discuss and to debate methods of making the Holocaust and its lessons relevant to American youth and how best to reach a culturally diverse student population. The Conference is sponsored by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, the American Federation of Teachers and the Educators Chapter of the Jewish Labor Committee.

At the Fourth Annual National Holocaust Teachers Conference held February 16-18, 1991 in Washington, D.C. , teachers represented 28 states and a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds. They taught in rural , suburban and inner-city schools. Some taught entire courses on the Holocaust, while others devoted only a few days to the subject. All agreed that it is the teacher's responsibility to bring the history and lessons of the Holocaust into the classrooms.³³

Teachers from all over the country participate annually in a three-and--a half week intensive fellowship programs in Israel and Poland on the Holocaust and Jewish resistance. Programs many times include visits to Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek and concentration and death camps.³⁴

The Importance of Holocaust Studies

In a survey taken in 1990, seventy-three percent of Americans believe that it is very important for all Americans to know about and understand the Holocaust. Of the 885 sampled, less than three percent were Jewish.³⁵ Sixty-four percent believed that the lessons of the Holocaust have a great deal or fair amount of relevance to the way Americans face moral choices today; fifty-four percent believe the Holocaust has a great deal of fair amount of relevance to the choices of American policy makers making decisions about human rights policies.

Support for Holocaust education is unusually broad-based among college-educated respondents, and those who say they already know a great deal about the Holocaust. There is a remarkable degree of public support that cuts across religion, gender, age, regional and socio-economic lines.

While encouragement concerning the understanding of the Holocaust can be found in the American public, there is also need to combat the revisionist denials of the Holocaust, the Neo-Nazi supremacists, and all form of bigotry, injustice, brutality, oppression, and inhumanity.

The true understanding of the Holocaust must be taught in schools, universities, libraries, seminars, forums, churches and synagogues, among young and old, rich and poor, among all Americans so that the ideals of freedom and liberty never will be threatened again, and human rights and human dignity will rule mankind.³⁶

Now each of the 6 million Jews of America must live for two; for himself and for one of the Jews who perished during the Holocaust. To live for those who perished means teach the world the message told by the tale of their death.

The Holocaust, this great human tragedy, the 6,000,000 innocents, the one and half million children, the great human suffering, shall never be forgotten.

Remember Us ³²

In Auschwitz
 The Earth has grown
 A fresh layer of green
 To conceal the blood stains.
 The smoke from the ovens now dismantled
 Has vanished in the sky.
 The cries of the anguish have grown silent.
 God has kept
 His covenant with man
 That life shall have rebirth.
 But piercing the silence
 I hear God's lament
 For His children...
 Slain by their brother Cain.

And I hear the blood of the innocent
Crying out from earth and sky,
Remember us,
Remember us.

Dr. Ben Zion Bokser, Rabbi

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CHAPTER 15

Epilogue

Encounter with Students

The author dedicated his life to share his experiences, especially with students, the generation who will hold the fate of the future of America and mankind so the tragedy will never be repeated and lessons of the Holocaust will be learned.

The Holocaust was a dark age for all mankind; it was also the great human tragedy for millions of innocent people. The author wanted to give the Holocaust human dimensions, not only statistics, numbers and operation of bureaucracy as a mass-killing machine.

The author developed a special relationship with the faculty and students of Glenbrook High School in Glenview, Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago. Over twelve hundred students participated in the lectures of the author. The correspondence and letters of students which follow will be illuminating and inspiring to all victims, to educators and to concerned citizens.

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

May 9, 1991

On behalf of the U.S. History Group, I wish to thank you for taking the time of to come to Glenbrook South and speak to our students about your experiences and the Holocaust. Your remarks were well received by both the students and faculty. The stories you related were poignant and the lessons most meaningful. Please consider gracing us with your presence again next year.

Sincerely yours, John D. Balgenoth

June 17, 1991

Dear Mr. Balgenoth,

Thank you for your letter and comments about my talk on the Holocaust to the U.S. History group.

It is my feeling that this tragic chapter in human history can not and shall not be forgotten and that we have a young generation that never allow it to happen again.

I received many letters from the students which made a deep impression on me and I will cherish them for a long time.

Please convey my best wishes and regards to the faculty and students.

Sincerely yours,
Frank Isaacs

24 February 1993

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

...We feel that Glenbrook South students receive a very solid academic background in the cases, nature, and consequences of the Holocaust, and we are quite pleased that you will be returning to GBS to provide our students with a sense of the *human element* (author's emphasis) of the Holocaust. We appreciate your willingness to share your experiences with our students.

Cordially,

Ben Hussman
U.S. History Team Leader

May 12, 1991

I thought you might enjoy reading these letters written by my students. We all enjoyed your presentation very much.

Bob Schoenwiller

CHAPTER 15

Epilogue

Encounter with Students

The author dedicated his life to share his experiences, especially with students, the generation who will hold the fate of the future of America and mankind so the tragedy will never be repeated and lessons of the Holocaust will be learned.

The Holocaust was a dark age for all mankind; it was also the great human tragedy for millions of innocent people. The author wanted to give the Holocaust human dimensions, not only statistics, numbers and operation of bureaucracy as a mass-killing machine.

The author developed a special relationship with the faculty and students of Glenbrook High School in Glenview, Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago. Over twelve hundred students participated in the lectures of the author. The correspondence and letters of students which follow will be illuminating and inspiring to all victims, to educators and to concerned citizens.

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

May 9, 1991

On behalf of the U.S. History Group, I wish to thank you for taking the time of to come to Glenbrook South and speak to our students about your experiences and the Holocaust. Your remarks were well received by both the students and faculty. The stories you related were poignant and the lessons most meaningful. Please consider gracing us with your presence again next year.

Sincerely yours, John D. Balgenoth

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I learn a lot from you. All my life my older friends have told what Hitler did was great, and I kind of believed them. Now after hearing your talk I realized that what Hitler did was very wrong. And for that fact I am not proud to be a German.*

Sincerely

Paul

*Paul was from Munich, Germany and came six months ago with his family to Glenview.

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your informative speech on the concentration camps. At times I feel embarrassed to be part of the human race. Although we are the living creatures that can reason, in my eyes there is no reasoning behind the deaths of so many innocent people. At other times, I am amazed at the courage that some people show during the hardships in their lives, you are a prime example. Thank you again for sharing your story with us.

Thanks again !

Jennifer

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you very much for your presentation of your experiences during the Holocaust. I learned a great deal from your presentation, you also answered many of my questions about this tragedy. A greatly admire your courage through this. Thank you once again for taking the time out of your day to teach us more about the Holocaust through your experiences.

Sincerely,

Carolyn

Mr. Isaacs,

I deeply appreciate the fact that you took a day off to come to our school and share your experiences during World War II.

Thank you,
Brian

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you very much for your touching lecture about the Holocaust. It made us all realize how we are the future and that we can't let this happen again. I am glad you talked to us about the Holocaust because no one truly knows what it feels like unless you went through the terrible tragedy. It helped us understand the terrible things that happened in that time period. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and time with us.

We really appreciate it.

Thanks again,
Maureen

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I would personally like to thank you for your outstanding lecture on the Holocaust. It was very informative and it helped me to appreciate what I have in life. The part of your lecture I remember most was when you stated you weighed 85 pounds. It has been my dream to be as skinny as one can possibly be for I feel I am fat, but after hearing what you went through to lose that weight it is no longer a dream of mine. You have taught me the importance of good health which can save your life. I feel you have had an effect on every person who was able to hear your speech. It was very kind of you to sacrifice a work day to talk to us. Your kindness is greatly appreciated and I will remember your lecture forever.

Sincerely,
Pam

Dear Mr. Isaacs *

Thank you so much for speaking to my U.S. History class this past week. I was very interested what you spoke of and it really had an affect on me even after the class. My friends and I even discussed it and we all agreed that you were such a great speaker, yet we all felt sad hearing what you went through. After class, I thought how painful it must be for you to speak of that time that was so terrible. I know a lot students learned so much and it was a speech which I will always remember. Thank you so much.

Love,
Suzanne

* Letter on a personal card and in a personal envelope.

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I'd like to personally thank you for taking time out to talk to our class, and many other classes. I could not imagine how much pain and suffering that happened in these camps. Last year, I read a book about a boy's perspective in the Holocaust. He described in detail how all the Jewish people suffered. He wrote about how his father was sick, he cried for water because of a high burning fever. A German soldier was annoyed and started beating him over the head with a club. I cried, for that was very touching. I think, Mr. Isaacs, that you made every interesting point when you said it is important to keep telling each generation of this great tragedy, so it would never happen again. I'm sure many students will not forget what you have told them, because many of them were very touched. Thank you once again.

Sincerely,
Kristin

Dear Frank Isaacs,

I'd like to thank you for sharing your experiences in the Holocaust with us. Your presentation helped me understand what really happened. I understand how hard it was for you to tell us about your experience, but I thought you did a great job. Thank you again for coming again. John

Dear Mr. Frank Isaacs,

Thank you very much for coming and telling us about the Holocaust. You made it easier to understand what really happened during the Holocaust because you were a survivor. Thank you again.

From,
Kerstin

Dear Mr. Isaacs*,

I would like to extend my gratitude to you for your presentation of your hideous experience. I have always wanted to hear a testimony of the Holocaust in person so that I could see for myself if the history books distorted the student's image of the event. I see now that I have seen and heard only half of the story. The story of your family's separation really astonished me. I don't know how you made it. Again thank you for sharing your experience.

*Typewritten letter

John

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you so much for taking time to share your experiences with my history class and me. Your descriptions and memories made the Holocaust much more real for me, than any book ever could. Your presentation also reminded me of my greatgrandmother's description of her escape from Poland, and how difficult it was for her to leave. I hope you will continue to speak to our classes, and I hope my teachers will continue to find such invaluable presenters. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Amy

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I want to sincerely thank you for speaking to us about the terror

of the Holocaust. As a 16 year old Jew, I have learned a great deal about the subject. I have seen films, heard speeches, visited the exhibit at the Field Museum, and taken a year-long class on it in Sunday School at my synagogue. None of the experiences was as interesting, stirring, or quizzing as your talk to my class on May 3rd. You were truly able to express the terror of the concentration camps and you were able to relay the agony of the six million Jews who died because of their heritage. You are an excellent speaker and it is people like you, people who have the courage to tell the tales, who will keep this from happening again. I think I can speak for my classmates in saying that your message was well received. We must teach our children and grandchildren of Auschwitz. We must never let the terrors fade away into the deep fanthoms of history. Only then can we protect ourselves. Never again.

Sincerely,
Corey

Mr. Isaacs,

I have never really thought about the Holocaust in World War II. My mother's father, my grandfather, had a family before he married my grandmother and they all died because of the Nazis. I know I can't truly understand what happened during that time. I know in my wildest dreams that I could not visualize what happened then. But because of your presentation I can comprehend it better.

Tom

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I am a junior who had heard your lecture about the Holocaust and would like to tell what type of experience it was for me. I very much enjoyed listening to someone to talk about the Holocaust, especially one who was actually there to experience it. I was saddened by some parts of your story such as when you went to the right, and your mother to the left to be never seen again. The idea of your visits to Glenbrook South to talk to the junior history classes is a great one. I feel it is a new and exciting method of capturing the sense of being at the Nazi

concentration camps for students. I , along with many other students feel honored to have you to come to our school and I hope that you will return to our school in years to follow to share your experience with more students.

Sincerely,
Seung

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Glenbrook South can not thank you enough for sharing your personal, frightening experiences with us. It takes a very strong man to retell such heart-breaking circumstances. I am sorry to hear about the saddening , unfortunate situation with your beloved mother. I can't imagine where you found your strength to survive, but I feel we are all fortunate to have met you. Thank you for bringing us closer to history. I'm sorry it had to be under such tragic events.

Sincerely,
Bridgette

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Your talk to us was very enlightening about what went on during World War II. I can't imagine what you went through and I'm truly sorry you had to. About your request to us to ensure that another Holocaust will not occur, I will do my best to see racial equality and the end of racial or religious persecution. The talk you gave touched me and frightened me at the same time. All the best.

Sincerely, Dean

Dear Mr. Isaacs

Thank you for presenting your story of the Holocaust. I began to see the true destruction and the human indecency that the Germans produced. I hope the people of the world will answer your prayer and never let something like this happen again. Thank you again for your wonderful speech.

Sincerely,
Alex

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I would like to thank you with great sincerity for serving as guest to my history class. Your speech of the Holocaust was extremely thought-provoking and moving. I believe I understand your motive in sharing the history that shocks America, to younger teenagers such as us. Since we are the next generation who shall be running this world, we need to be fed great amounts of knowledge- concerning the past, so that the same mistakes are not made again. I appreciate., once again, your visitation as a guest speaker for our class. Please feel welcome to our school.

Sincerely,
Veronica

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you very much for the talk you gave to my history class. The information you gave, helped me to realize the difficult times you have lived through. You not only inspired me to get more involved in politics and world affairs, but you also made me want to know more about the Holocaust. I am very glad to have had the chance of hearing you. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Steffanie

Dear Mr. Isaac,

The students of Glenbrook South High School would like to thank you for sharing your traumatic experiences during the Holocaust. I was very sorry to hear about the tragic way you lost your mother. It is amazing that you survived everything that you were put through, eating, particularly nothing everyday. Thank you again for giving us a better insight on how terrible the Holocaust really was.

Sincerely, Ashley

Mr. Isacc's,

I was one of the honored students that was able to hear your talk.

I was very excited to hear your talk. You started your talk at the time of your life when it seemed to you, personally, were doing good. You just graduated high school in spite of no Jew rule. Your mother get you into a good university and then, at the peak of your learning, the Nazi's took you and your mother. When you said that you never saw your mother again I had a tear in my eye. This description of the concentration camps will stay in my head forever. The reason of why you were there will also stay in my head. I will personally make sure nothing like what you had to go through will happen again. Once is already too many times.

Sincerely,
Chad

Dear Mr. Isaac,

It was an honor to have you visit our school and speak to our Social Studies classes about the Holocaust. It isn't so very often that we are able to see and hear about historical event from the point of view from someone who has actually been through it. Especially something like the Jewish Holocaust where it seems hard to get good sources of information. You spoke very eloquently. I hope you will be able to return in the future to talk to future history classes about the Holocaust for it would very helpful.

Sincerely,
Philip

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you very much for taking time of your busy schedule to come and talk to our class. You are a wonderful speaker. Your description of your grueling struggle was clear. I admire you very much. You were very courageous to be able emotionally and physically overcome the hardship of the awful Holocaust. Again, thank you for speaking to us. Your speech was extremely enlightening.

Sincerely, Karen

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I want to thank you for your presentation . I was really moved by it and your presentation made me spend more time thinking about the Holocaust. Listening to you speak really enlightened me about the life in the camps. I appreciate the fact that you took a day off from work to talk to us. Thank you very much !

Kara

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I really enjoyed your speech on what you went through during the Holocaust. It must have been very difficult for you to talk to us about such a difficult subject. I think it's very important that this school knew what happened during that time, and I'm very glad you spoke to us.

Sincerely,
Beckie

Dear Frank Isaacs,

Thank you very much for your touching lecture about your experience in the Holocaust. My grandparents escaped from Germany to get away from Hitler. However, my mom's uncle died in Auschwitz. Other members of my family also died in concentration camps, but we are not exactly sure how. I will never understand why someone would want to kill six million people. Your lecture was very informative and detailed. I really admire you for your courage.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Jenny

Dear Mr. Isaacs*

Thank you for coming to our school last week. It was very kind of you to share your time with us. I don't think there was one student that was not touched by your tales of the Holocaust. It

was very saddening to learn of your separation from your mother. After your lecture, as all students, filled out of the room, there was an intense silence. This was a sure sign that you had the undivided attention of each and every student in that room.

Thank you again for coming and relating your unforgettable experiences with us.

Sincerely,
Rebecca

* Typed on computer

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I want to thank you for a very well done presentation. I understand how hard it was for you to talk about your horrible ordeal. I found it very informative and brought me a little closer to understanding and sympathizing with the Holocaust survivors.

Sincerely,
Feliciane

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to hear your informative speech on the Holocaust. Your insight on the subject really helped us to get a feel of what it was really like during that time period. I know my generation can never suffer such a horror, yet by knowing a little more about your experience, it can be prevented for future generations. Thank you for coming to our school.

Sincerely,
Edward

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you for giving our school your presentation. Although I'm sure I'll never know the fear and horror you went through, at least I have an idea of what was it like. I'm sure nothing like

that will ever happen again because people, such as yourself remind the rest of the world of the tragedy that occurred during the Holocaust.

Sincerely,
David

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you for coming and speaking to my history class. I learned a lot more from your speech,, about the Holocaust than from reading about it in a book. Hearing about the Holocaust in person made it seem more realistic.

Sincerely,
Tracy

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I would like to take this time to thank you for the wonderful speech you shared with my class the other day. I now have a greater understanding and an idea of what really happened at the Holocaust. I also feel a great sympathy toward you and the great ordeal that you had to overcome in your past. I hope that in the future we can prevent an occurrence like that to ever happen again.

Jeff

Dear Mr. Isaacs,*

Thank you very much for speaking to my class about the Holocaust. It was very informative and intriguing. I deeply appreciate your sincerity and effort in expressing your message. Your speech had a great impact on me and my friends. I will never forget it. Thank you very much.

Kevin

* Typewritten.

Mr. Isaacs,

I would like to thank you for coming to Glenbrook South High School. You told us more about the Holocaust than any history book could ever tell. Although it is extremely difficult to talk about the Holocaust, people like you will teach our generation to avoid another one.

Sincerely,
Kristi

Dear Mr. Isaac,

I truly enjoyed what you had to say about the Holocaust. I understand what you went through and realize the evil caused by the Nazis. I enjoy history and I enjoy discussing the terrors of World War II to those who are non-believers. I am a believer and understand that your point was clear : History cannot repeat itself. I thank you for speaking to us about your experience, one I hope to never endure.

Sincerely,
Patrick

Mr. Isaacs,

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for talking to our class. Before you visited I had known about the statistics of the Holocaust and I even visited Dachau when I was on a trip in Germany. I happened to walk through a small museum they had set up in the barracks at Dachau. Even after this I still learned more about the Holocaust from you because of the story of your experiences. I know that many other students enjoyed and benefitted from your story. Usually when the bell rings at G.B.S. the students bolt for the door but when you were speaking students listened attentively until you were finished. Once again thank you.

Sincerely,
Doug

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I want personally thank you for coming to our school. I am an Indian student here at Glenbrook South and sometimes know how hatred and racism feel. Your presentation on the Holocaust really enlightened me. I could not comprehend how such a terrible tragedy could occur because of the ideals of one man. Some of your memories sent chills down my spine to think that you were my age when this began to occur in Europe. I sometimes feel as though being only one person, I can never do anything about prejudice that goes around. Your presentation cleared my mind of that idea. These memories must sometimes be painful to you, but by spreading the message of the Holocaust, you are doing a great service to stop contemporary racism in its tracks. With all of this senseless fighting going on in the world, your presentation helped to realize that there is some type of hope. Once again I thank you for the bottom of my soul for coming and hope I am able to hear you speak again.

Sincerely, Nirav

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I really enjoyed your moving lecture on the Holocaust. It's one thing to read about it, but it is another thing to hear about it. No textbook can replace what you have told us. I thank you for coming, and I hope that you keep coming. I am also sorry about your family.

Your friend,
Kenneth

To Mr. Isaacs,

I am very glad you came today and talked to us. There were many questions that I had before you talked to us, and afterwards most were answered. For example the number of deaths and exactly how were the prisoners treated. The most amazing part is that out of all the books I read about the Holocaust, you provided me with the most valuable information, and I just wanted to say thank you, for coming and talking to us

Thanks,
Simran

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

I would like to thank you for coming to speak to us about the Holocaust. It was a very interesting presentation that made me a little more aware of what many went through. Not only was the presentation informational it was also emotional - a rare element of an excellent presentation. Thank you again for making me more aware of the Holocaust and I am grateful that you took the time to visit us

Sincerely,
Denise

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you for coming to our school and teaching us about the Holocaust. Knowing that it is being told by experience makes it more interesting. I hope the Holocaust never happens again. I learned that we have to take a stand against it to stop it. I hope that you come back next year and help other kids see the truth. I know you are making a difference in people's lives.

Thank you,
Emanuel

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you for the presentation you gave to our history class. The fact that twelve million civilians were targets of Nazi mass killing is a sad commentary of the human race. It was enlightening to hear a personal story of the Holocaust. It is one thing to read about Nazi death camps, in which so many millions died, but it is another to actually meet someone who lived through them. I was quite fortunate to visit a concentration camp site in Dachau and was able to reach a better understanding of what went on during World War II. Through these different learning experiences, one thing has become clear to me. The universal point being made is that the Holocaust was a tragedy against the human race and should be used as an example to teach a lesson to us all to treat our fellow man with respect and unite for the defense of peace and freedom. We owe it to ourselves, and those that died, to pass this principle to

future generations. Thank you for your time and willingness to share of yourself.

Sincerely,
Karen

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

Thank you for coming and speaking to my history class. Your talk really touched me, and helped me to understand the Holocaust. I was very confused about what actually happened, and your talk really cleared everything up for me. You made me want to learn more about the History of the Holocaust, and other serious subjects. Your talk had a great influence on me. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Michelle

I think Mr. Isaacs' presentation was very interesting. For the first time I met someone who survived captivity in a concentration camp. I have seen two concentration camps about which Mr. Isaacs talked. I visited Auschwitz and Treblinka when I was in eighth grade. It is hard to describe a feeling that a person gets when he or she visits a place like that. For me it is even harder to imagine how a person can share his experiences of living in a concentration camp. However, I think that it is necessary to do that. Young generations have to be reminded about what had happened just half a century ago. We all have to make sure that a tragedy like that will never happen again. But did we learn from our mistakes? Will people ever stop fighting each other and try to live in peace, or will we destroy ourselves in a new Holocaust, a Nuclear Holocaust. There are over two hundred wars going on in the world right now and all it takes is just one push of a button.

Meremi

I learned many new things from Mr. Isaacs' presentation. For the first time, I learned the feelings of an actual person, not just the numbers. Mr. Isaacs get me to realize how bad these people suffered, and when I think that I had a bad day, it's really not that bad. Being able to hear Mr. Isaacs talk about his experiences, relate some of the experiences my great- grandparents went through. I never met them, but now I can relate what my grandmother was talking about. Learning things out of a textbook can be hard for me, so this really helped me understand the Holocaust much better.

Missy

I learned from Mr. Isaacs presentation that we must learn from the past to protect our future. Mr. Isaacs shared with us his personal tragedy to help show us that this terrible event in history should never happen again. His depressing story taught us of the importance of human compassion and peace. He made us all think twice about the importance of our freedom. He passed his story to us so the world will never forget the horrors which happened. We all must learn from Mr. Isaacs story and we must never forget.

Scott

Dear Mr. Isaacs,

First, I would like to thank for telling us of your experiences of the Holocaust. Next I would like to say that the presentation was memorable.

The statistics I already knew about. But I just couldn't six million of anything let alone six million people. People with friends and families.

The heartless style which they conducted themselves made me angry. The Nazi party blamed and killed innocent people. These atrocities will be remembered through the rest of time.

Sincerely,
Tony

Mr. Isaacs, I am really glad that you came to our school in order to share your experiences with us regarding the Holocaust. Your message really touched me passionately and for the first time I realized how horrifying the Holocaust was for the people who were part of it. I personally feel that your message of making the world a better place for everyone is really making us care about the world and watch out for something like this would never happen again. I thank you very much for coming to our school and sharing your experiences with us and giving us better insight of human terror. The Holocaust.

Hiral

To Life...

From the Kingdom of Death

to the Kingdom of Life..

The journey in writing this book was very painful... Memories were rekindled, images reappeared, nightmares hunted; tears were shed.

But there was, is, and always will be Hope. The family is reborn; children and grandchildren continue the legacy. They are named after the departed perished in the Holocaust.

Memories linger. Life's blessings start to bloom. Redemption is closer.

But much work still has to be done. Much education is still needed.

Fight for a better future can never stop.

Humanity and morality shall prevail !

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